MARIAE CORONA

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CHAPTERS ON THE MOTHER OF GOD AND HER SAINTS

BY THE

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FOURTH EDITION

DUBLIN :
BROWNE AND NOLAN, LIMITED
BRANCHES : BELFAST, CORK AND WATERFORD

Printed in Ireland

Nihil Obstat:

MATTHAEUS MacMAHON,

Censor Theol. Deput.

Imprimi potest:

✠ EDUARDUS,

Archiep. Dublinen.,
Hiberniae Primas.

DUBLINI, die 21° Aug. 1924.

PREFACE.

YIELDING to the request of the Committee of the Catholic Truth Society of Ireland, the Author has decided to give a permanent form to the following pages, most of which he has kept in manuscript for a considerable time. He feels that the only valid reason for publishing them is the hope entertained by the Committee that they will help to promote a tenderer love of the Queen of Saints, and a better appreciation of lives which were in a large measure devoted to her service.

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Mary, the Morning Star.

"Our tainted nature's solitary boast."—WORDSWORTH.

I.

THERE is always a difficulty about our treatment of the supernatural. However we may have tried to bring it home to our understandings, and to master it in all its details, there is always a consciousness that we have failed. Even when we call to our assistance the Word of God, and the Fathers of the Church, to enable us by study to comprehend our subject fully, yet there remains an uneasy feeling that we have mastered not our subject, but our idea of it—that our words have merely gone to express our own ideas, but have been utterly inadequate to describe that supernatural truth to the minds of others.

In a certain sense, this is more true of the mystery of the Immaculate Mother of God than of any other mystery of Christian Revelation. Because in approaching all other mysteries we acknowledge them to be mysteries, and confess our own inability to comprehend them; but in speaking of God's Mother, we grow through familiarity, perhaps, into the mistake of believing that we are speaking of a subject that

comes within the range of human knowledge. And it is only when we have recognised the truth that if the Incarnate God be the greatest of all mysteries, the Mother of the Incarnate God must participate in that mystery, that we shelter ourselves under our humility, leaving to God the knowledge of His mysteries, and retaining only our wonder and admiration for Him and them.

This mystic character has been given to the Mother of God by her close relations with her Divine Son. The Incarnation of Our Lord Jesus Christ conferred upon His Mother a dignity proportioned to His humiliation. He humbled Himself, and she was exalted in the humiliation. He became Man, and she became the Mother of God. The deeper He descended, the higher she ascended. He emptied Himself of His glory, and clothed her with it. He concealed all His supernatural powers and qualities, and descended upon earth to mingle amongst men, and behold! He raised His Mother at the same time from her place amongst men, and endowed her with supernatural powers and supernatural graces. He robbed earth of a great deal that He might make a larger compensation to earth—taking from earth a Mother, and giving it a Son; taking from earth its purest and holiest daughter, from men their best-loved sister, and giving Himself in return; infinitely purer, infinitely holier than she, and yearning to be better beloved through her and for her sake. And thus Jesus met His Mother half-way betwixt heaven and earth; she, raised to meet Him, and He, descending to meet her; there Mother and Child were united, and there united and inseparable they live for ever in the thought of Christians.

The mystery of the Mother and Child, therefore, remains the great mystery of Christian Revelation. It is the one great central mystery upon which the others converge. And they who try to separate the Mother from the Child are consciously

or unconsciously undermining the truth of His Incarnation. They are counteracting the designs of God's Providence, and undoing the very work upon which God has been labouring from eternity.

Among those who are capable of comprehending this subject, there is nowadays but a very narrow field for discussion on the privileges of the great Mother of God. It would be difficult in our days to find anyone who would have the hardihood of asserting that the Angel Gabriel might have been sent to any other Hebrew woman as to Mary; or that the Maternity of the Blessed Virgin was a mere instrumentality which conferred no privileges upon her, needed not the special preparation of the Spirit, and left no dignity or unsurpassed holiness. There are few who do not recognise that there is a close connection between the functions assigned to her and the grace conferred upon her; and though not often spoken of in Scripture, they who understand its spirit, and that there is a meaning in its silence, as well as in its utterances, acknowledge, that the Word of God assigns to her the very place which is given to her in the Litanies of the Church: Queen of Patriarchs, of Prophets, of Apostles, of All Saints, surpassed in holiness only by the Author of all sanctity Himself.

This gives us large ideas of the dignity of the Mother of God; but they fall far short of the reality. Because here we are tracing her dignity only to the moment of Incarnation, whereas Mary filled the mind of God years before creation, and entered largely into the designs of God in fashioning His Universe and perfecting it.

The greatest privilege of Mary, next after her Divine Maternity, is that of her Immaculate Conception. And to us it has a special significance, inasmuch as it proves that our Venerable Church, as it grows year after year, and century after century, under the protection and patronage of Heaven,

increases at the same time in its love and veneration for Christ its Spouse, and Mary its Mother. And whilst the world outside the Church is yearly growing more and more estranged from God, and is therefore engaged in paring down the privileges of Mary, and the attributes of Jesus, the Church is gaining a clearer insight into the workings of the Spirit of God in the past, and a clearer knowledge of the effects of His omnipotent grace in these souls, which He designed for Himself. The world, having lost the love of God, has lost the knowledge of His power and of His mercy; the Church, growing in the love of God, is gradually gaining a fuller insight into the secrets of His wisdom and His power. And thus, while men are losing all belief in the supernatural, and measuring God by their own thoughts, the vision of the Church into eternity grows brighter and clearer, and therefore is her faith more fervent and profound. Now, let us see how this is exemplified in the preparation of Mary as Mother of God.

The Almighty God has said: "My thoughts are not as your thoughts, nor My ways as your ways, but as far as the heavens are removed from the earth, so far are My thoughts above your thoughts, and My ways above your ways." The Almighty Creator reaches from end to end; His knowledge is from eternity unto eternity, and all things are clear and manifest to His eyes. In His eternal Word He ordains all things and decrees all creations. And at the same time He looks onward far before Him, and, contemplating the end of His works, He contemplates means unto the end, and subordinates the intermediate means to the final end. And if this be true of the most ordinary acts, how much more true is it of that great act which is the embodiment of all God's dealings with the world, I mean the Incarnation of His Adorable Son.

First of all in the designs of God, then, is the Incarnation of

His Divine Son. It was decreed and determined from eternity that the Second Person of the ever-adorable Trinity should become Man in time. And how? How was this mystery of Divine Love to be effected? How was that body to be fitted for Jesus in which He should die, and by that death redeem the world? The Almighty Creator could have easily raised for Him a body out of the slime of the earth, as He had done for Adam; or He could have gifted Him with a purely celestial, spiritual body, as some heretics supposed. But, no! At the same time that it was decreed that Jesus should be born it was also decreed that He should be conceived and born of a woman. That woman was Mary, and therefore we find that the idea of Mary co-existed in the Divine mind with the idea of the Man-God, that she existed from all eternity before the mind of the ever-adorable Trinity—Mother and Son, Jesus and Mary, the mystery of God made Man, and the mystery of the woman through whom that mystery was to be effected.

It is on this account that the Church applies to Mary these words in the Sapiential Books: "Then the Creator of all things ordered and said to me; and He that made me rested in my Tabernacle. And He said to me, Let thy dwelling be in Jacob, and thy inheritance in Israel, and take root in my elect. From the beginning, and before the world, was I created, and unto the world to come I shall not cease to be, and in the holy dwelling place I have ministered unto Him. And so was I established in Sion, and in the portion of my God His inheritance, and my abode is in the full assembly of the saints—and I perfumed my dwelling as storax and galbanum and onyx and aloes, and as the frankincense not cut, and my odour is as the purest balm. I am the Mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope. In me is all grace of the way and of the truth: in me is all hope of life and of virtue. Come to me all you that desire me, and be filled

of my fruits. For my spirit is sweet as honey, and my inheritance above honey and the honey-comb. My memory is unto everlasting generations."

And, when time commenced, and man endowed with free will, began to abuse it, and that mighty sin was committed which inaugurated the beginning of this world's horrors, at the same time a promise of a Redeemer was held out to a fallen world. The Redeemer, it was said, was to be given through one of the very race of him who had so grievously offended his Creator. As the Messias was to be the second Adam, Mary was to be the second Eve. As through Adam sin entered into the world, and through sin death, so through Jesus grace should be given to the world, and with grace, life. But as Eve was the first cause of the fall, though it was not through Eve sin entered into the world, so Mary, the second and superior Eve, was to be the means through whom life entered the world in the Person of Jesus, though she herself was not the Life. Sin then was introduced into the world by Adam through Eve; and grace was introduced into the world by Jesus through His Mother Mary. There is an exact parallel, and if we may justly conclude that Jesus, the second Adam, was infinitely superior to the first, we may also conclude that Mary, the second Eve, was superior to the first, and that therefore, she could not be subject to the misery of sin which Eve inflicted upon the world.

As time went on, whenever the reign of evil seemed specially to predominate in the world, men looked forward to the fulfilment of that first great promise. They looked for the Messias that was to come and save His people; and they knew that He was to be recognised by a sign, and that sign was Mary, His Mother. "A Virgin," said Isaias, "shall conceive and bear a Son, whose name shall be called Emmanuel." "A woman," said Jeremias, "shall encircle man." Now in all these

previsions of the Prophets, one thing was hoped for, one thing expected, and that was the salvation of the people of God, the Redemption of the world from the tyranny of sin. And as it had never entered the minds of these Holy Prophets that the Redeemer Himself could be the slave of the enemy He had come to conquer, neither could it have been believed by them, that she who was so closely associated with Him, through whom His Divinity and great mission were in a measure to be proved, could ever be the slave of sin. For, if God could say to Jeremias the Prophet: "Before I formed thee in the womb of thy mother, I knew thee; and before thou camest forth I sanctified thee, and made thee a prophet unto the nation," how much more truly might He have said of the Mother of His Son: "Before I created thee I knew thee, and gave thee as a Mother unto my Son."

The Almighty said: "My thoughts are not your thoughts," and how clearly this is evidenced in the Immaculate Conception of Mary! My thoughts are not your thoughts; nor My ways your ways. If they had been, alas! how different would not Mary have been—Mary who is now to the Church, "the glory of Israel—the honour of her people." "A Virgin shall conceive," said Isaias. A Virgin did conceive, says the Church, and that Virgin is Mary. And if it be true, that to give greater honour to her Divine Son, or for some other design beyond our ken and known only to Almighty God Himself, the Sacred Scriptures do not give utterance to any elaborate panegyrics on her virtues or her dignity, we have supplied the place, and we have scrutinised the designs of God, and tried to understand Mary as she appeared from the beginning to the Most Holy Trinity, and to the angels at the moment of her Immaculate Conception. And we have taken one or two expressions, so remarkable, so wonderful, that they can only have been spoken of a Being very dear to Almighty God, and from them

we have built up in our minds an idea of what Mary is, and of the distinguished place she occupies among the children of God.

II.

In the schools of Theology there has always been taught a very sublime doctrine concerning the Incarnation; and although it is not a defined dogma of faith, it has always found many advocates, both because it affords a simple answer to the sophisms of science, and because it gives us a better knowledge of the benevolence of God. It is this, that the fall of man is not entirely the cause of the Incarnation, that our Divine Lord would have become Man even though man had never fallen. The fall of man imparted to the Incarnation its expiatory character, but God would have become Man if there had been no sin to be expiated, and He would have become Man not for the Redemption of one race of men, living on a single planet, but for the exaltation of the entire universe. According to this opinion, then, the Incarnation entered into the original designs of God about His creation. The Incarnation was not an afterthought suggested by the sin of Adam. It was not a penalty demanded by the justice of God for original sin. And it was not at all the primary design of God that His Son should come upon earth as a Victim. These accidents were added to the Incarnation by the sin of Adam. But it was the design of God from eternity that His Son should assume a created form and live as a creature, not primarily to redeem the race of men upon earth, but to bind the universe more closely to its Creator. The Incarnation, therefore, formed part of the original designs of God in framing His universe, and without the Incarnation, Creation would be incomplete. It would be finite, and at a distance from its Maker

His blind instrument fulfilling His will, not voluntarily, but through the compulsion of His omnipotence—a gorgeous temple worthy of the majesty of God, and admirably fitted to sound His praises—but without a priest and without a worshipper. But how was God to unite Himself to creation? By assuming the nature of Man. For creation is two-fold, spiritual and material. If God assumed the nature of an angel the material part of His creation would still be separated from Him. By assuming the nature of Man He linked Himself to Creation's spiritual and material elements. For the body of man is the highest type of material nature, and the soul of man is the lowest in the scale of spiritual natures. And, therefore, God assumed the Body and the Soul of Man, for in Man's nature the two creations met—the spiritual nature in its descending, and the material creation in its ascent. Thus, in the Incarnation creation would find a king to rule it in equity, a priest to direct its worship, and to offer its adorations. This was the enigma of Heaven; this was the test of the angel's faith—the humiliation of God, whom they had never seen but in the splendour of His Majesty, to a hypostatic union with the humble human, material creation. "The Word made Flesh," as St. John says, "was the test of the spirits." Those who turned aside, and refused their supreme worship to their God in that lowly form, perished. Those who received the Revelation, received at the same time the reward of their obedience, confirmation in glory, and indefectibility in grace. And thus we enumerate the three mighty effects of the Incarnation—to fallen man it restored his birthright; to the angels in Heaven it gave eternal security in grace; and to the material creation it has given a relation to God unseen by us, until the material part of us shall be spiritualized in the resurrection of the dead. And thus it follows that we have three great truths. That the union of the Creator with His creation by means of

the Incarnation is the ultimate end and perfection of creation, and, therefore, the primary idea in the mind of God. The fall of man determined that Incarnation should be completed by Redemption, and, therefore, is our Divine Lord called the "Lamb slain from the beginning of the world." The second truth is that the universe has been created for our Divine Lord —it is His temple, His tabernacle. All things lead up to Him and are perfected in Him. He is the completion of that which without Him were for ever incomplete. He is the keystone of the arch of the universe, and He is its Pontiff and its King. And, thirdly, the Son, the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity, was chosen to unite creation to its Maker, because He is the First-born of every creature; He is the uncreated image of God, as the souls of men are the created images. God's eternal idea of Himself, His living uncreated likeness, not a creature, but the type in origin of all creatures, was chosen by Infinite Wisdom to unite with Himself His uncreated brethren upon earth. This made St. John declare that "all things were made by Him, and without Him was made nothing that was made." And again in the Canon of the Mass the Church declares that "by Him and with Him, and in Him, is to thee God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honour and glory." Now, from all this it is evident, that the Incarnation of His Divine Son filled the mind of God from eternity. But it is also clear that this stupendous miracle could not have been conceived by God independently of the mode in which it was to be performed, and that mode was the Divine Maternity of the Blessed Virgin. Simultaneously, therefore, that is from eternity, these two ideas existed in the mind of the Eternal Father—the Incarnation of His Son, and the Maternity of the Mother—in other words, Jesus and Mary. It is impossible that they could have been separated—the one idea could not be present without the other. For if the Redeemer was first in

the Divine intention, as One through whom all things should be made, His Mother was conceived with Him in the mind of God, because it was through her He was to become Incarnate. And if Mary was present to the minds of Micheas and Isaias when the prophecy was made, "that a virgin should conceive and bring forth a Son, and His name should be called Emmanuel," we can only conclude that from eternity she existed in the mind of God, from whom those prophets received an insight into the future, but to whom there was no future, no time, but a vast unmeasured present. Hence does the Church apply to the Mother of God these words spoken of Uncreated Wisdom: "I came out of the mouth of the Most High, the first-born before all creatures. From the beginning and before the world was I created. The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways, before He made anything, from the beginning. I was set up from eternity and of old before the world was made. The depths were not as yet and I was already conceived."

If we master this one idea, we shall find it the key of many mysteries. It affords us at once a powerful confirmation, if there were need, of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. For, according to this doctrine, the second Eve was prior to the first, not in order of time, but in the eternal plan of God. She was not only highest in dignity, but she was the first in the Divine intention, the first in God's design of the work of creation. And thus existing before Eve, she could not be subject to the penalty of the sin of Eve; or rather, this prior existence before the mind of God, gave her a kind of right that she should be exempted from the penalty which every child of Adam contracts. Of course, the principal cause of her exemption was the merits of her Divine Son, who redeemed her by anticipation. But she had a right to those merits founded upon the fact that she had existed in the mind of God from

eternity, and the accidental circumstance of Her creation in time could not violate that right of immunity from Original Sin.

Again, according to this theory, Mary is the link between heaven and earth; for through the Incarnation the union of God with His creation was effected, and Mary was the instrument of the Incarnation. Now what does this expression mean, and what are the necessary consequences? If the Incarnation be the union of God and His universe, *i.e.*, the infinite with the finite, the Creator with His creatures, it is clear that the Creator would choose for that union the highest of His creatures—the one who remaining a creature yet approached nearest to His own infinite perfections. It involved infinite humiliation on the part of God to become Man at all; but having issued His eternal decree to that effect, and that decree being thus irrevocable, it was due to the majesty of the Son that His communication with creatures should be effected in a way befitting His dignity. If it had pleased the Eternal Father, this could have been done in many ways.* But He had determined that as the Son was born of the Father from eternity, He should be born of a Mother in time. It only remained for His infinite wisdom to devise, and His omnipotence to create, a Mother befitting the Eternal Word. And such a Mother is Mary. One thing, therefore, and one thing alone bounds and limits her dignity and excellence. She is a creature and finite. Refuse to her those excellences that belong exclusively to God; but she possesses every excellence that can consist with the character of a creature.

It was decreed by God at the fall of our first parents that, as their posterity would have inherited a right to eternal happi-

* *Theologians discuss the different ways in which the body of Christ could have been formed, as immediately from the slime of the earth, or by means of a celestial and visionary body, which some heretics maintained was actually the case.*

ness if God's command had not been disobeyed, so, too, they should inherit the taint of sin with which their parents had defiled themselves at the suggestion of the tempter. Therefore, every child is born into this world with the stain of sin upon its soul—an enemy to its Creator—a slave to the powers of darkness—with no right to heaven that was shut against it by sin. The law is universal; the greatest saints have not been privileged with exemption; God's justice will not remit the stern punishment until every soul shall have paid the penalty attached to that one original transgression. Once and once only did He create a soul that was never even for an instant defiled with the slightest sin—once and once only did He create a soul that was as pure at the instant of conception as it is now in Heaven—once and once only did He relax the stern judgment on our race and clothe a soul with original justice and sanctity, and innocence, and grace superabounding, with attributes of ineffable grandeur—a soul on which the least shadow of sin never for an instant rested—a soul on which the Almighty could ever turn to gaze upon with pleasure when weary of the deformity which sin had stamped upon mankind.

It was the time when the fulness of years having come that the Son was to leave His Father's bosom and take flesh amongst men to redeem them, the Most Holy Trinity had to design and create and send into the world the soul of her who was destined to be Mother of the Incarnate Son. For centuries God had not created a soul in grace; he fashioned and formed them, and sent them into the world, but with the seal of sin and eternal death upon them—in the power of His enemy before they had left His omnipotent hands. But now the old time was for an instant to come back again, when the Almighty could look upon His work and say that it was good, and that it did not repent Him that He made it. Nay, more, the angels were very beautiful, but they fell. Adam was holy

and innocent, but he fell; but now was to be created a woman brighter than the brightest angel, and with holiness and innocence which Adam could not hope to attain, and she was to be confirmed in grace from the very first moment of her conception. Again, Adam, however great, had no higher destiny than we; the angels, however fair, had to worship God afar off; but she that was now to be created was destined to be in closest union with her Creator for all eternity, to be the Mother of Him before Whom the angels are not found pure, Whose tabernacle is the sun, and Who bows the heavens beneath His feet; she was to possess the glorious privilege of Divine Maternity, while her pure virginity remained intact; she was to be the sanctuary in which the Most High should ever dwell; she was to have for her Son the Creator and Father of all things, and she was to co-operate with the Almighty in the great work of human redemption by giving birth to the long-expected Messias. And the Father putting forth His omnipotent power, and the Son exhausting the treasures of His love, and the Holy Ghost breathing on their counsels His ineffable wisdom, the soul of Mary sprang into existence from the hands of the Holy Trinity, "Coming forth as the morning, rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, shining in the temple of God as the morning star in the midst of a cloud" (Cant. iv.). Thus, was the holy Mary conceived, the fairest soul that ever came from the hands of God, endowed by the Holy Spirit with His choicest gifts, most prudent, most chaste, undefiled, inviolate. And God wondered at His own handiwork, and the angels adored their Queen in speechless awe at her surpassing beauty, and hell trembled at the conception of a woman that was destined to destroy the power of its prince. Conceived Immaculate—fulfilling the promise of the Psalmist: "The Most High hath sanctified His Tabernacle." "Fear not, thou shalt not die, not for thee but for these has the law been made"

"The hand of the Lord strengthened thee, therefore wilt thou be blessed for ever." Well might Mary exclaim: "Come ye and hear what great things the Lord has done for my soul." "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of my ways, before He had made anything from the beginning; I was set up from eternity, and of old before the earth was made; the depths were not as yet and I was alrady conceived." Conceived Immaculate—fairer than the unfallen Eve, our second Mother, who retrieved through her Son the fall of the first, and freed us in her own person from the taint upon our race, that man was necessarily the slave of sin and the enemy of his Maker. Conceived Immaculate—to be the source of joy to millions of unborn Catholics that were to be proud to acknowledge the high privileges of their Queen. Conceived Immaculate—and not priding herself on her purity to despise us as impure, but constituting herself by reason of her very sinlessness our advocate with God—the defence of our virtue and the apologist for our crimes—our shield on the one hand from the fiery darts of the evil one, and on the other from the anger of the Living God.

III.

The assistance which God renders His immortal Church illuminating the minds of her teachers with His wisdom, and inspiring the faithful with a spirit of docile piety and implicit belief, is in nothing more evident than in the progress and development of devotion to the Blessed Mother of God. The vision of the woman clothed with the sun, with the stars around her head, and the moon beneath her feet, is to us Catholics, thank God, nothing mysterious or apocalyptic. We see in it but Mary, the Mother of God, and our Mother—the solitary boast and only perfection of our fallen nature. Woman, yet more than angel; human, yet raised to a perfection it is

not given to any other creature to attain; created and finite, but in the world of grace omnipotent—such is Mary, and as such do we reverence her, mingling our reverence with tenderest affection and unfailing confidence. And the Church of God, enlightened by His Holy Spirit, has at all times recognised in this Virgin attributes more than human, more than angelic—perfections nearer to God's infinite perfection than the united perfections of all the saints and angels that ever have been, or ever shall be created.

We enjoy the privilege of belonging to the generation of the children of God, that has been called upon by the authoritative voice of His Church to accept the dogma of the Immaculate Conception as part of the great body of Catholic faith. It has been the lot of many of us to behold the teaching Church of Christ, her Doctors, her Pontiffs, her Apostles, and the Vicar of Christ Himself, declare after lengthened deliberation and in solemn council, that this was a truth evermore to be believed by every Catholic, that the Mother of God, in view of her privilege of Divine Maternity, was by a special grace preserved from incurring original sin. And we have seen the faithful of the Church of Christ, in whose hearts that doctrine had ever been piously believed, accept with acclamations of joy and triumph the verdict of their pastors and cry out with a unanimity as remarkable as that of the Ephesians when the privilege of Mary's Divine Maternity was vindicated:—"Blessed for ever be the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mother of God."

And herein are discernible the workings of that spirit of harmony, of that nice sense of discrimination of what is congruous or unbefitting in the worship of God and His holy ones, which is a special characteristic of the Catholic Church. In other communions we have nothing but chaos and wild confusion, doctrine clashing with doctrine, and creed with creed.

But in the Catholic Church everything moves in uniform harmony. Interpreting the will of God, as God Himself has appointed, she builds up altars here and there to the princes of His household, and leaves the wide infinity for God Himself. She looks with pleasure at her faithful worshipping around these altars, well knowing that in honouring and reverencing the virtues of the saints, we but honour and reverence the attributes of God, as manifested in these, His servants, and seeing with eyes of inspiration that the incense of praise and prayer that circles for a moment around the altars of the saints, finds its last resting place around the throne of God Himself.

In nothing is this spirit of harmony more observable than in the belief of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, which always existed in the Church. It was this instinct, inspired by the Holy Ghost, that made the saints of God from Apostolic times vindicate this privilege for their Mother; it was this sense of what was befitting the majesty of the Redeemer that made St. Ambrose declare Mary "a Virgin untouched by the slightest stain of sin"; that made St. Augustine say, that when speaking of sin, there should be no question of Mary; and it was this same inspiration that heaped upon Mary from the pens and lips of her devoted servants such titles as "Ever Blessed," "Daughter of God," "Born of God," "only Daughter of Life," "Tabernacle of the Most High," "Immaculate Child of God," "Gate of Grace," "The New Heaven," "The Sweet Ointment." "The Fountain of all Divine Grace." And it was this same teaching of the Holy Spirit—that it was befitting that Mary, who was to be the Mother of God and Mediatrix between her Son and the sinner should not be conceived in sin—it was this same teaching that led the Church of Christ, her Pastors, and His Vicar, to declare

the Immaculate Conception an article of Catholic belief. He taught them, to be sure, and they teach us, that there was a law so general, that it might be called universal, the law that entailed upon every child of Adam the penalty of his father's sin; but He taught them, too, that there was another law, equally universal and what is more, immutable —a law sanctioned by the words of the Redeemer Himself— "that a bad tree cannot bring forth good fruit." How then could Mary—in the hypothesis, that even, for the sake of argument, I am afraid to make, namely, that she was conceived in sin—bring forth Jesus the sinless? How could Mary, defiled with original guilt, bring forth Him, before whom the angels are not found pure? How could Mary, with concupiscences like other creatures, of weakened will and darkened intellect, bring forth Him who is all-seeing, and whose every will is a work? Therefore, if Jesus is sinless, and pure, and perfect, she from whom He sprang must have been pure, and sinless, and perfect—not, indeed, with a perfection equal to that of the Divinity, but with a perfection which no other creature has ever attained.

Again Mary was to be Mother of the Redeemer. She it was that was to crush the serpent's head; it was for her heel the devil was to lie in wait; this was the woman between whom and the tempter God Himself had placed everlasting enmity. And was it befitting that she through whom the Deliverer should come should herself be a slave? That she, whose hatred of sin and hell should be so intense and perpetual, should actually be under the power of both? And how can it be believed that God should design that there should be a never-ending war between the Mother of his Son and the powers of darkness, and at the same time frustrate this design by placing her in their power?

She was to repair the fall of our first mother, Eve. "Thou

alone, O blessed Mother of God," cries a distinguished saint, " who didst bring forth the Redeemer and Saviour of all, thou alone hast repaired the sin of Eve." " Through thee the condemnation of our race through Adam has been revoked, and man has been reconciled with his Maker." And who shall say that Mary, who restored the integrity of our race, was less perfect than Eve who destroyed it? Yet Eve was created in a state of original justice, sanctity, and innocence, and Mary, forsooth, was conceived in a state of original sin.

Lastly, Mary was to be evermore Mediator between God and man. She was to occupy a position infinitely inferior to that of her Divine Son, but above men and angels and the highest choirs of spirits in Heaven, alone and unapproachable. From her high position she was to distribute God's graces and favours to men. She was to be the almoner of Heaven. God reserved to Himself His justice and power; but He clothed Mary with His mercy. And to her were the eyes of sinners for ever to be turned; to her were they to fly for protection; she was to be their refuge and asylum, and a terror to the powers of hell. And when she lifted up her pure hands to her Divine Son, think you that He could allow His enemies to sneer at His Mother for that she was once in their power : " Physician, heal thyself? " On the contrary, He redeemed His Mother by His Precious Blood as He redeemed us, with this very great difference, that He redeemed us by delivering us from sin and from the eternal death which it entailed. He redeemed His Mother by meriting for her by anticipation the singular privilege of preservation from original sin. So does the Catholic Church teach and so do we believe.

We look up to Heaven marvelling at this wonder of God's creation, and trying to imagine what God Himself

must be, when this, His creature, is found so fair. Her image falls to earth an image of beauty and holiness, that speaks eloquently of the power of God's grace; and under its shadow we walk, and they who need it are healed. And in the sight of angels, fallen and unfallen, we are disposed to think better things of our humanity, which the Son of God espoused, when He had perfected it in the person of His Immaculate Mother.

IV.

There is one thing remarkable in the definition of the Immaculate Conception. It was not forced upon the Church by a heresy, but it arose from the free, spontaneous will of her pastors and children, who spoke and acted as if there were a common feeling through Christendom that the dogmatic pronouncement of her Immaculate Conception, of her immunity from the great curse upon our race, was an honour to our Mother that had been too long delayed. Rarely does the Church select a truth from the great body of written or unwritten Revelation and incorporate it with the body of Catholic truth, unless when impious men, playing fast and loose with the holy things of God, oppose the common teaching and tradition of the Church, and seek by cavilling and sophistries to subvert some fundamental truth, and thus diminish the honour of God or His saints. Then does the Church with conscious power raise up that dogma or truth from the region of discussion or controversy, and setting aside the paltry objections of men, she declares it to be of faith, and affixes the seal of condemnation to the opposite error. But no such exigency forced the Church into the dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception. That definition was pronounced because the

Church willed it; because throughout the Church there was an unanimity of opinion that admitted no objection, and a holy impatience to put the honour of our Mother beyond question that admitted of no delay. Yet hell has not been silent. It would be strange, indeed, if it were. Very strange if the serpent whose head the woman crushed would not give a final hiss, when the Church, the defender of that woman's honour, put the truth of her Immaculate Conception beyond question and demanded from the world of men, the belief that she was never in his power, but that her victory over him was more complete than his triumph over the human race. And so the heretics of our age are raging and will for ever rage, whilst they tremble and complain as if in the presence of an unseen power that hurts them: "What have we to do with thee, thou holy one of God?"

And as it is the way of heresy to reject the Son by rejecting the Mother, so it is the way of true Catholic devotion to seek the Son through the Mother. And so in our age devotion to the Immaculate Conception and to the Sacred Heart of Jesus go hand in hand. Jesus and Mary are inseparable. Whenever Calvary is repeated in Heaven by the commission of mortal sin upon earth—whenever the sight of the sins of men brings upon the Sacred Heart of Jesus the sickness and anguish of Gethsemani, and the red wounds gape afresh, and the blood streams to chase away anger from the Father's face; there is always a fresh sword driven through the heart of the Virgin Mother, and memories of Calvary come to her, that are second only in bitterness to the reality. So, too, when faithful Catholic hearts cluster around Jesus to tell Him of their undying fidelity, it is always a joy to the Mother.

There is something ineffably consoling in examining the

testimony of centuries that have passed into eternity, and of saints who have gone to their rest; and finding, however high we may ascend on the stream of tradition, the Church unswerving in its fidelity and devotion to the ever-blessed Mother of God. Changes have come over the spirit of the Church from time to time; at times the fervour of the faithful has cooled, and at times it has increased; but devotion to the Mother of God in the Catholic Church seems to admit of no increase; it was as fervent in the time of the Apostles as it is now. When we read the writings of such fervent advocates in our age as St. Alphonsus Liguori, or Father Faber, it seems to us that no saint of the Church has at any time written so eloquently on the praises of Mary; and that class of Catholics who hover between God and the world, and have not fully declared for either, may, perhaps, deem these praises extravagant; but we find, if we examine into the past, that there have been saints who had as tender a devotion to the Mother of God as either, and devoted their whole lives to her service and her love. In fact, it has been always clearly recognised in the Church, that as Mary occupied a prominent place in the Redemption of the world, so she possesses a large claim upon the gratitude of the world. And if our Blessed Lord claims our entire love, He by no means intends to exclude His Mother. We cannot, therefore, honour the Mother of God too much; nor can we too fully confide in her. We cannot honour her too much, because we know that every offering we make to Mary finds its resting-place in the Sacred Heart of her Divine Son. We cannot confide too fully in her. She has held Omnipotence Itself in her arms, and He gave, as it were, this attribute to her; she is the dispenser of the infinite blessings of Redemption. Neither check nor limits are imposed upon her benevolence. There is no such virtue known to her as

economy of Divine graces. "They who work by me shall not sin." God adorned her with His graces, and her life of grace was commenced with her Immaculate Conception, but it did not end there. All her life was spent in adding to the grace she received at its starting-point. "Much was given to her because she loved much." She loved much and she proved her love by the test of suffering. As with the saints so with Mary, her love and her pain was the measure of the grace—and we cannot tell her grace because we can neither measure her love nor fathom the sea of her sorrow. But we desire to honour Mary as best we can, and we should like after our poor fashion to praise God for her and with her. And as she is to be loved and honoured not merely for her natural gifts, but far more for her gifts of grace, we try to magnify the mystery of her Immaculate Conception, from which, as from a most pure fountain, all her graces sprang forth abundantly together with her natural life, its richness and its splendour.

Would you therefore honour this great Queen? Would you honour her Immaculate Conception? Would you make some reparation to the Queen of Heaven for the blasphemies that are spoken against her and her Divine Son—some slight atonement for the flippant way she is spoken of by heretics? Do it through Jesus. Come to His feet, like Magdalen, and lay the burden of your iniquities there. "Many sins will be forgiven you if you love much." And if there be joy before the angels of God for one sinner that does penance, what joy will there not be in the Immaculate Heart of Mary! Come, then, come with your souls on your lips, and your lives in your hands, ready to yield up both to our Divine Lord and His Immaculate Mother, and in the Sacrament of Love make a compact with God—an eternal, irrevocable compact of friendship and of love—an eternal

vow to be like the sinless Mary. Why sinless? Because predestined to be the temple of the Incarnate God—the dwelling-place of the Most High. Are we not the same in the Holy Communion? Why, then, should not we be as sinless as she?

Sinless, most of all, in these times—for a Catholic to sin in a world like ours that hates God, and in an age that ignores Him, is high treason, and contains a special malice. It is a consolation to know that our connection with such a world must terminate. We are going to eternity, as fast as time can bear us. The feasts of our Lady fly by like the lights upon a line of railroad. Let us watch them well, making them landmarks of grace on our great journey to eternity. Let us keep those feasts now in such a way that the memory of them may hallow our death-beds and make them peaceful. For our good works, too, go with us into eternity—our faith, our hope, our love. Our love to be intensified—our hope to be changed into certainty. Our faith—what shall our faith in the Immaculate Conception become? Vision—for as soon as we catch the first glimpse of the face of our Mother in Heaven, we shall know that it required no elaborate proofs, no theological appliances, to make us recognise the truth that Mary was from the first instant of Conception the chosen child of the Most High; the ark of the Lord for ever sanctified—the temple of the Lord that was never defiled.

THE
Greatest Doctor of the Church

"Noverim me, noverim Te."

TO those who will not, or cannot understand the supernatural work of the Church of God, there appears to be a dull uniformity in the lives of our Catholic saints, which they think inexpressibly repulsive. To them the saying of St. Paul that there is but one Spirit, but different operations of the same Spirit, is unintelligible. Nor can they bring themselves to believe that the sanctification of a soul is a work of infinite design, and that that design varies in beauty and originality according to the nature of the soul itself, or the mission it is sent to accomplish amongst men. Here the Spirit breathes, and behold a zeal that sets a continent on fire; on this soul the Spirit descends, and behold a charity that searches out and consumes all grosser things like fire, and like a flame points steadily upward; and here behold again the white vestal lamp of purity, lighted and kept alive by the same Divine breath. In one saint the moral and spiritual elements are so expanded and developed that the operation of the intellect appears to be suspended; and in another you pause in unconscious suspense to decide whether the moral and spiritual beauty or

the intellectual grandeur reflects more glory on the Giver of both. To this latter class most certainly belongs the great Doctor whose name is so familiar to us, Augustine, the son of St. Monica. A saint whose love for God lifted him almost to the level of that beloved disciple who saw the city of God in the heavens, as Augustine saw the city of God upon earth; a saint who to-day—after fourteen centuries, which have blotted out the names of all his contemporaries except those who have shared his immortality through his writings—is teacher, prophet, and intellectual guide to leaders of thought throughout the universities of the world; aye, even to framers of laws and sovereigns of men, whose word makes or mars the happiness of nations. And here at least no complaint can be made of that which the world calls monotonous and sluggish tameness, which we call the calm, unbroken peace, which is the reward of high sanctity. For the life of St. Augustine is marked by such striking events, and his great soul passed through such extremes of passion and doubt, that the pious soul can draw inspiration from his holiness, the philosopher or divine fresh wisdom from his learning, and the student of humanity will feel a new interest in the struggling of a soul to disenthral itself from the fierce promptings of passion and the seductions of intellectual pride. For Augustine was a convert—from a sinner he became a saint—from a doubter and denier he became a believer and a teacher; and it is to commemorate this marvellous and touching change, wrought in such strange and simple ways by the omnipotence of grace, that this paper is written.

I.

And first, we must distinctly understand that his conversion was two-fold, yet simultaneous—a moral conversion and an intellectual enlightenment—perhaps the only example of

it that you will find in the history of the Church. For be it known that the striking conversion of great intellects, such as those of which we are witnesses in a neighbouring country, is generally interpreted as a recognition by the Holy Spirit of the pure lives and the noble striving after light which have marked the careers of these converts. They were then simply lifted from the twilight of the valley to the full splendour that shines on the holy mountain, and the natural virtues which they practised were elevated to the rank of supernatural excellences by the Divine power of faith. But with Augustine there was not only intellectual blindness to be relieved, but moral depravity to be corrected ; and his conversion is all the more glorious, inasmuch as the scales fell from his eyes, and the shackles of fleshly love from his limbs at the same moment, and his noble nature was lifted into the serene regions of faith and purity by one and the same operation.

It is not at all difficult to understand how this young rhetorician, African by birth, Roman by education, drifted into those criminal excesses, which he afterwards so bitterly deplored. A hot ardent nature, into which the tropical sun had stricken his fires, lay absolutely at the mercy of those fierce passions, which please and pain, but whose tortures far more than transcend the transient delights which they bring. Religion, with its sweet, soothing influences was unknown to him. Those radiant visions that afterwards haunted him, with their pure ethereal splendours, until they lifted him from the slough of sin, were yet far off. At home the example of a Christian mother was more than overshadowed by the example of a Pagan father, who almost revelled in the iniquities of his child, and whose passions, blunted by age, seemed to be newly whetted in the contemplation of similar passions that daily evinced themselves in his boy. Then, too, sacramental grace was absent from his soul, for by a series of

accidents the Sacrament of Baptism, which he was about to receive in a dangerous illness, was deferred, and he grew to manhood with the great original stain infecting his whole character, and changing even his good impulses into criminal issues and results. With such sad equipments he was thrown into a world that just then was reaching its perfection of iniquity, for the hosts of darkness were marshalling their forces for the last conflict with victorious Christianity.

Young, ardent, impetuous, Augustine was thrown into the midst of the dissipation and vice of that city, which, while Rome was being gradually changed into a city of sanctity, borrowed its worst vices and made itself the home of its lascivious worships, and flung open its temples to the deities whose names were pollution, and set itself in angry antagonism to that religion of sacrifice and purity that already had lifted its conquering standard on the seven hills of its ancient rival, Rome. It is rather difficult for us to understand the excesses to which men yielded themselves freely in these Pagan cities. They were demoniac rather than human. A Christian preacher dare not speak of them in detail, nor can the imagination dwell on them without sin. We have some pictures left us of the licentiousness and sensuality, the festivals of blood and the orgies of unutterable lust, that characterised ancient Rome. Yet Carthage was another and a more wicked Rome. The civilization of the latter had penetrated to the conquered province, and under a warmer sun, had given birth to vice, which even to accomplished Rome was unknown. A carnival of vice in the streets—vice deified in the temples—vice incarnated on the stage—poets consecrating their divine talent, and orators devoting their sacred gifts to the embellishment of vice—such was the normal condition of a city which, in the just judgments of the Eternal, is to-day but a name, whilst its great rival assumes

with justice the proud title of Eternal. Into Carthage, thus seething in sin, young Augustine was plunged; and in a short time, as he himself pathetically tells us, he was ashamed when he heard his companions boasting of flagitious actions, that he was less guilty than they. And so, at the early age of nineteen, a victim of two deadly vices, ambition and sensuality, his father dead, his mother weeping and praying, young Augustine commenced to tread the wine-press of the sorrow that is begotten of sin, not knowing that he had any higher destiny than to become famous in the schools or law courts—not knowing that there were higher and loftier delights than are to be found in the pursuit of sin. And so he wasted the most blessed gifts of God —the years of youth and the strength of budding manhood —in a little study and much pleasure; dreams of fame and desires that raged and could not be quenched; a folding of the hands to rest in a carnal and sensual paradise; and not a thought of the immortal soul, nor of the God in whom yet he believed, nor of the eternity in which he was laying up for himself treasures of wrath against the day that was to come.

It was just at this time, too, that he embraced the Manichean heresy—one of the most singular inventions of human folly that ever claimed the credence of men. Its founder, Manes, an Eastern mystic, a slave by chance, a painter by trade, a prophet by profession, claimed, like Mahomet in later times, that he was specially deputed by Heaven to bring a new revelation to men. And as the latter showed his disciples a certain book, which he declared was written in Heaven, so the credentials of Manes were certain pictures which he pretended were painted in the skies. He perished in a fearful death; but his disciples, with all the energy and enthusiasm of falsehood, filled every chair of rhetoric in Carthage, and claimed as converts some of the most distinguished men of that city. They spoke of the Father and the Son and the Paraclete, but

with some meaning in these words which no Christian could accept; declared the marriage tie to be immoral, and wine the incarnation of evil; they invented some theories of nature whose absurdities alone made them credible, because they could not be refuted, and like all religious charlatans they were for ever crying truth! truth! when the truth was not in them. If one did not know the infinite capacity for folly that lies latent in the human mind, we would be surprised to hear that such a great intellect as that of Augustine, not only embraced this folly, but became for nine years its most able and zealous professor. But the secret was that these Manichaean doctrines were very flattering to his pride, and very favourable to the indulgence of those passions that consumed him. Their falsehood and sophistry afforded him ample ground for exhibiting all the logical power and rich eloquence of which he was even then a master. The severe doctrines of Christianity left no room for conceits and sophisms which he could build at pleasure around the loose and ill-defined errors which now he professed; and he hated not only the austere religion, every syllable of whose doctrines and discipline upbraided and made him ashamed, but he disliked the simplicity of the Scriptures, nor would he believe that the wisdom of the Eternal was revealed in language that would not be tolerated in the grammar schools of Carthage. "He cried aloud for wisdom, and wisdom fled far from him; for he would not put his feet into her fetters, nor his neck into her chains." But it must not be supposed for a moment that Augustine drifted helplessly along with the current of iniquity without a struggle. A great soul like his does not yield itself to such abasement without protest. The higher faculties of the soul, not yet destroyed, declared against this animalism, and the great intellect was striving with all its might against the darkness which enveloped it. I know nothing more pitiable than the spectacle of a fine soul

struggling against its lower nature, if it be not the spectacle of a lofty mind striving vainly to break through its spiritual darkness, and emerge into the light. To know what is right, and yet to be unable to do it; to hate what is wrong, and yet be unable to avoid it; to lift oneself bravely out of the slime, and then to fall back helplessly, to fight against overwhelming passion, and then to yield shamefully, and after a moment of fierce delight to tear and rend oneself with a remorse that is hopeless and a despair that is helpless—surely this is the saddest of fates. Yet, it finds its parallel in the spectacle of a soul holding its hands for ever before its eyes to peer into the darkness and search its way into the light—yet evermore turning away despairfully to a gloom that is all the deeper because enlightened by sudden gleams of fitful splendour. Yet, in each sense, such was now the condition of Augustine's soul. Love and light! love and light! such was the eternal cry of Augustine's lips and heart. Love for an object so high and sublime that the intellect should never weary in contemplation of its transcendent excellence—love for an object so perfect that the conscience should never scruple its warmest attachment—love so strong that every pulse of the heart should cling to the loved object so that death itself could not break, nor time diminish the strength of its affection—love so vast that the soul should ever wander through its happy realms without exhaustion, and there find its happy rest and fruition; and behold, in answer to this high demand there was only the love of a perishing creature, and the low levels of sin and death. There was some ideal beauty for ever before him, beckoning to him, attracting him, almost maddening him with the impossibility of reaching it; and behold when he stretched his hands towards it, it was only a phantom, and he touched only the one void of wisdom, the woman of Solomon, "sitting upon a stool at the door, and saying come and eat willingly the

bread that is hidden, and drink of the sweet stolen waters." And light, light, to understand himself and the dread environments of nature. Who was he? What was this awful mystery of life, in which the unseen God had placed him? What was the secret of the grave? Who were those beings around him with the masks for ever on their faces, and the veils over their hearts? Good and evil, right and wrong, who hath stated their limits, who hath defined their natures? Would he ever see clearly? Would he ever know certainly? Would this restless intellect ever repose in the serene contemplation of truth, so perfect that it admitted no shadow of doubt or denial? Yet to all this impatient questioning came no answer, only the last words of dying Grecian philosophy, the devilry of imported Roman worship, and the well-coined phrases that slipped from the lips of sophists or poets. And with all this hunger in his heart, this wild unrest in his intellect, Augustine went round from law court to lecture room, from temple to theatre; and the young Carthaginians worshipped and envied him, and asked one another: "Were you present at the lecture of Augustine Aurelius to-day?" or "Did you hear the dispute between Augustine and Faustus?" "Why, he tore the threadbare arguments of the old Manichean to pieces." But he kept the veil drawn tightly over his heart; God alone saw its workings; so it is with all of us.

II.

Well it is for us that the eye that searches us is the eye of a Father and a Friend. All this time, however, two powerful influences were at work to bring this erring soul into its true mission. That Divine Being whose presence made cool and pleasant the flames that scorched the bodies of His martyrs; whose love, to the eyes of enraptured virgins, made sweet and

easy the absolute sacrifice they made; whose Cross in after times was the Sacred Book whence Doctors drew their inspirations, was watching and waiting for the soul of him, who was destined to become a "vessel of election." For although Augustine did not as yet quite understand the full meaning and beauty of Christian truth, he had always cherished the most extraordinary reverence for its Divine Founder, and the name of Jesus Christ was to him a symbol of everything that was high and holy. He declared in his *Confessions* that though he felt himself strongly influenced by the writings of Cicero, one thing particularly displeased him in the works of that great author, that he found not there the name of Christ; "and whatsoever wanted this name," he said, "however learned soever or polite or instructive it might be, did not perfectly take with me." And this sweet influence was insensibly drawing him away from his Pagan beliefs and practices, giving him new and larger views of that wisdom after which he thirsted, silently upbraiding him for his follies and excesses, for ever contrasting the grandeur of humility with the meanness of pride—the dignity of purity with the shame of unbridled concupiscence. What a contrast between the simple majesty of Christ and the proud folly of philosophers—between His words weighty with solemn meaning, and their utterances weak and inflated—His example so lofty and perfect, and their lives so secretly degraded and imperfect! And how that Divine Figure haunted him, not with terror and fear, but with the same benign influences that rained on the soul of Magdalen or St. John! Wherever he went that apparition was before him, chiding him, attracting him, making him angry with himself, and dissatisfied with the world; and he would make the most valiant efforts to overcome the temptations that were around him, and then sink back into despair again; for the time fixed in the eternal decrees for his conversion

had not come, the gold was yet to be more tried and purified by fire, before it could receive the impress of its King.

And day by day, night after night, prayers were ascending before God's throne for him, prayers that wearied and did violence to Heaven by their strength and persistence. There is something altogether supernatural in a mother's love. It is the strongest reminder we have of God's boundless mercy. It is so weak, yet so powerful; so patient and so persistent; it has such a superb contempt for the logic of facts, and the sequence of sin and punishment, it is so ready to turn vice into virtue, and to accept the faintest turning from sin as the promise of high perfection; it is so faithful, so perfect, so unselfish, so true, that next after a saint's love for God, it is the best thing our earth can show. And if ever this beautiful love existed in human soul, it surely was in hers, whose name is for ever inseparably united with that of St. Augustine—his sainted mother, Monica. How she watched over him in his childhood and boyhood, how she strove by her example and teaching to destroy the evil effects of her husband's example on the child, how deeply she suffered as the first reports of her son's perversity came to her ears, how fervently she prayed that his heart might be touched and renewed unto penance—all this St. Augustine himself tells us, adding to the story the high appreciation he always had of his mother's unselfish devotion. And a certain remorse was added to the mother's prayers. For she remembered that she too had sinned by ambition, and perhaps had sacrificed the purity of her child to those ambitious longings of future fame which she had shared with him. If she had only known how Augustine would be tempted, if she could only have foreseen the dangers that are strewn in the paths of the young, and the pitfalls that are dug for their every footstep—well, it is useless to be regretting a past that cannot be recalled, and

after all Heaven is merciful, and she has seen a certain vision in which she has been told that the mighty gulf between her and Augustine shall yet be bridged, and he shall yet stand side by side with her, and they shall kneel together, and their prayers shall mingle, and the merits of the Mighty Sacrifice shall be shared between them, and he will be her almoner, and the peace of the future shall wipe out the memory of the past—when suddenly she is told that Augustine, tired of Carthage, is about to depart for Rome—and her hopes are shattered, for she believes that now he shall be lost to her and God for ever. And yet this step of quitting Carthage, even though accomplished in secrecy (Augustine having slipped away from his mother in the night-time) was the first great step towards his conversion. For, having opened his school at Rome, after recovering from a violent fever, he was so disgusted with the conduct of the students, and their habits of deception and dishonesty, that he applied for a chair of rhetoric in the city of Milan and there was rejoined by his mother. Now, in this city was "a man of God," chosen, like Ananias of Damascus, to teach and illumine the great darkened intellect that was sent to him. Attracted by the fame of St. Ambrose as a preacher, Augustine went to hear him; and having heard him and admired his eloquence, the deep truths which he preached, and against which Augustine would have closed his ears, gradually sank into his mind, and gave the first great shock to those prejudices which he had conceived against Catholicity. For, like all those who rage against the truth, he little understood it, and he found "that it was not against the Catholic religion he had barked, but against a chimera, invented by its enemies." And there, Sunday after Sunday, when St. Ambrose ascended his pulpit, he saw beneath him, the widow and her child—she, calm, prayerful, patient; and the young professor, whose lectures half the youth of

Milan were attending, modest, humble exteriorly, listening eagerly to the exposition of Christian truth, but pride, pride, pride, for ever stiffening his neck, and steeling his heart against that first great act of lowly abasement by which he was to enter the portals of God's Church. Irreligion and immorality, these twin giants that ever work in unison, guarded the gates of his heart. If one yielded for a moment the other was all the more alert. If the powerful eloquence of St. Ambrose shattered every argument that in the secrecy of his heart Augustine fashioned against Catholicity, here was the sad companion of his guilt to protest against embracing that religion which glorifies purity and virginity; and if ever, and alas! it was rarely, his soul, raging under its base subjection, clamoured to be free from the degradation of vice, here was the vain philosophy that captivated him, and made him ashamed of the simplicity of the Gospel, and that doctrine of humility that is always the stumbling-block of intellectual pride. What hope was there for him at all? Here on the one side was the heresy which he not only believed but professed; pride, that waxed stronger with every year of success; the strength of manhood allied with the strength of sin, and, above all, this illicit love which is coiled round his heart like a serpent—and on the other—only the prayers of a mother and the Sunday sermon of St. Ambrose. But I am wrong! there was One also with him; and "He who bade the winds and the waves be still" was now at last going to calm the tumult of this mighty mind. And in His own simple, Divine way he chose as His minister a Pagan and a child. Alypius, a dear bosom friend of Augustine's, was a young pagan, who, in the midst of all infamy, had always worshipped purity; and knowing the terrible torture that Augustine suffered, he used to reason with him, preach to him, extol the beautiful virtue, paint in darkened colours the horrors of the hateful vice. Maddened by his own helplessness, tortured

by a passionate desire to be free, Augustine would listen patiently, and then rush into solitude crying, Leave me! leave me! not yet! not yet! And his friend would stare and wonder at him, and be silent in the face of such anguish. Then there would come to the soul of Augustine a celestial vision of chastity, clothed in white light, with a glittering band of children around her, pure, ethereal, divine, and she would point to her children and say: "Behold what these are doing, why canst thou not do? they the unlearned—you the accomplished; they so weak in nature—you clothed in the strength of your manhood; they so frail—you so powerful;" and the vision would vanish, and leave him in an agony of shame and sorrow. Then, one day a traveller came and told of a wonderful sight he had seen—a desert peopled with men who led the lives of angels, who sacrificed not only all sinful love, but all human affection; young men, calmly saying farewell to their affianced, and passing out from the gay city to the silent sands; and the brides that were to be to-morrow, espousing themselves in mystical union to the Lamb, leaving all things to follow Him.

And Augustine, not able to contain his emotion, fled again into his garden and cried: "What are we doing? Did you not hear? The ignorant, the unlearned, carry the Kingdom of Heaven by storm; and we, with our boasted science grovel on the earth. Is it not a shame that we have not the courage to imitate them?" Noble words, Augustine! At last! at last! And he flings himself in anguish under a fig tree, and he, the philosopher, the orator, the professor, sobs as if his heart would break with uncontrollable grief. And he hears the voice of a child in a neighbouring garden singing its play-song, but his ears have never heard that childish melody before. He listens, and catches the singular refrain: "Tolle, lege; Tolle, lege!" Who ever heard a child utter such strange words

before? But perhaps, who knows, the words might be a heavenly message to himself. And trembling with some strange emotion he takes up a book lying on the grass before him, and opening it by chance he reads: "Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness; not in chambering and impurities; not in contention and envy; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences." And suddenly, as when in tropical climes the sunshafts break upon the darkness and chase the shadow from the valley and mountain, a great wave of light flooded his soul, and a strength and a sweetness descended upon him, and the tears of anguish still wet upon his cheeks are chased by tears of joy, such as angels shed when the wanderers are gathered into the fold. Paul had spoken to Augustine; the convert of Damascus to the convert of Milan; and the latter wondered at himself, and the mighty change that had been wrought in him. Was he really the Augustine who only yesterday saw doubts and difficulties in Catholic truth? Was he really the slave, who used utter that pitiful prayer—"Give me continence, O Lord, but not yet?" Why, surely, Catholicity is not only the perfect revelation of the Lord, but it is the culmination of that very philosophy which is shadowed in Plato; and therefore it is a religion not only for babes and sucklings, but it is strong meat for the mightiest kings of thought at whose feet he had sat and studied. And as for chastity, if every fibre of his heart shall be torn asunder, and tears of blood shall be shed, he will no longer be shamed by children, but consecrate by an inviolate vow body and soul alike to the service of Him who hath loved him with an everlasting love. "O Lord, I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid; thou hast broken my bonds asunder; to Thee I will offer a sacrifice of praise. Let my heart and my tongue praise Thee, and let all my bones say: 'O Lord,

who is like unto Thee?' Let them speak, and do Thou answer and say unto my soul: 'I am thy salvation.' Who am I, and what am I? What evil is there not in me and my deeds? Or if not in my deeds, in my words? Or if not in my words, in my will? But Thou, O Lord, art good and merciful, Thy right hand had respect unto the abyss of my death, and from the bottom of my heart did drain dry that sea of corruption." Such are the opening words of the Fifth Book of the *Confessions*. Emancipated, saved, as Daniel from the lion's den, the children from the furnace, as David from his sin; he must sing a canticle of gratitude to his Deliverer and lay upon the altar a sacrifice of praise and prayer. And surely, if ever a human oblation could be an atonement to the Most High for sin, it was the noble offering that Augustine now made. He laid his heart and intellect on the Altar of the Lord. Purity filled the one; faith exalted the other. He had found that beauty ever ancient, ever new, after which his soul had thirsted; and except the inspired melodies of the Psalmist, convert, too, like Augustine, there is no record of human speech so beautiful, so exalted, so sublime, as those soliloquies and meditations in which he poured forth the ecstacies of his soul towards the great Invisible Being, whom unknown he had worshipped and loved. I do not know if there be any record that the Veil of the Unseen was lifted for Augustine, as for St. Paul and St. John. But I find it difficult to understand that anything less than the Vision of the Eternal could have inspired a human soul with such seraphic love, as that which clearly burned in the heart of our Saint, and winged every word that he spoke or wrote with celestial fire.

III.

And yet, somehow we are more attracted by the oblation of his intellect, than by the sacrifice of his heart; and by the stupendous work that intellect accomplished when the light of Divine Faith was shed upon it. The history of the Church is full of examples of mighty minds, that were barren and fruitless till the sunshine of Faith fell upon them; but St. Augustine stands for ever as the most brilliant testimony of the power of purity and faith to bring forth the flower and the fruit of graceful eloquence and solid wisdom, which the Church of God treasures even more than his corporeal relics, and which even an unbelieving world would not willingly let perish. And the singular fact remains, that although St. Augustine spent the best years of his life in heresy when his mental power was fresh and vigorous, the world has not preserved one single line that he wrote, one utterance from platform or forum, yet guards most jealously the riper products of his genius; for, without faith what is human wisdom, or what is the "tinkling cymbal" of human eloquence compared with the trumpet tones of a voice resonant with Divine power, and vibrating with the consciousness of the truth and importance of its utterances? And so, as Augustine, the licentious student, is completely forgotten, and would to-day be unknown to men, were it not for his own most truthful and pathetic *Confessions*, so Augustine, the orator and professor, is completely hidden by the glories that surround his name as a Doctor and a Saint. For, as the eagle of the mountains, born and reared in a slimy cage, is utterly unable to feel or exercise its strength, and beats its wings feebly, and is blinded by the faintest ray of light, and begins to love its captive degradation, but once free, it beats the air and feels fresh strength with every new pulsation of its wings and soars at last into the Empyrean,

and plunges fearlessly into frightful abysses, and poises itself over the roaring torrent, and looks steadily on the face of the sun itself; so the soul of our Saint prisoned in the den of irreligion and vice, was utterly powerless to exercise its moral and mental energies; but once emancipated, free, it rose into the very highest spheres of thought, and plunged into the deepest and darkest problems of existence, and lifted itself into spheres of inaccessible light, and gazed steadily on the mystery that shrouds the majesty of the Eternal. Nothing was too great, and nothing too small for this searching intellect. It swept calmly over all the vexed questions that torture the souls of men—time and space, free will and Divine foresight—the existence of evil and a benevolent and all-wise Providence—the inspiration of Scripture—the eternity of worlds, all passed in review before him, and he knew what the loftiest intellects had said about them, and then touched and transfigured them by the magic of his own great mind. No one has ever told the world the limits of human knowledge and the infinity of Divine Faith in clearer language than he. Plato told him all about God—told him of the Word, only begotten, who reposed for ever on the bosom of the Father, led him to the very boundary of the Christian revelation, but stopped there—there was the gulf that could not be bridged over—there was the gulf across which for thirty years he strained his eyes in vain for a way whereby he could pass, or a guide who would take him by the hand and lead him; until at last he saw in Christ "The Word made Flesh," and came to the knowledge of God through Him who was "the way, the truth, and the life." And that knowledge once attained, behold, everything underwent a transformation in his eyes. The Scriptures which he had derided for their simplicity suddenly unfolded their sacred majesty in word and meaning; the philosophy he had adored became the dark, obscure

parchment-scroll across which, invisible but to Christian eyes, the name of God was written; and nature unfolded her thousand charms to him, and with her thousand voices echoed the peaceful exultation that filled his heart. And now, like the great saint of Assisi, in later times, he began to love his life and the world, whose every aspect and accident revealed the gentle presence of its King. In the colours that blend and mingle on the bosom of the great deep he saw the love of God ever considerate for his fretful and wayward child, and in the slender filament that binds together the glossy plumage of a dove he recognised the hand of Omnipotence that has fashioned the burning souls of the seraphs.

"I entered into the secret closet of my soul guided by Thee, and beheld with the mysterious eye of my soul the light that never changes, above the eye of my soul, above my intelligence. It was not the common light which all flesh can see, nor was it greater yet of the same kind, as if the light of day were to grow brighter and brighter and flood all space. It was not like this, but something altogether different from all earthly illumination. Nor was it above my intelligence in the same way as oil is above water, or heaven above earth, but it was higher because it made me, and I was lower because made by it. He who knows the truth knows that Light, and he who knows that Light knows eternity."

I have passed over by design, the valuable services rendered by St. Augustine to the Church in the controversies with the heretics of his own age, such as the Donatists and Pelagians, for although it must always be remembered that his writings about the Church's dogmas or discipline were and are of supreme importance, I prefer to linger on those wider issues where he comes directly into conflict with modern thought. For, whereas the whole tendency of modern thought is to dissociate philosophy and religion, it was his

constant task, as it is his highest glory, to have united them. And it would be quite impossible to exaggerate his splendid services, not only to the Church, but to religion in the great department of theological science. His works are a storehouse of information and reasoning, from which every succeeding generation has borrowed material for defence or attack. One by one the great Christian thinkers have approached him, and bowing before his lofty genius, have taken from his hands the material from which they have constructed works that make their names memorable amongst men. And these, not only Catholic writers, but such men as Paley, Chalmers, Butler, M'Culloch, who each in turn wrote on natural religion, and showed the Revelation of God, not in Scripture only, but in nature herself. From St. Ambrose, his own master, down to the statesman who yesterday held a high and unique place in literature as in politics, every great illuminative intellect has been indebted to our Saint,; and if we had no other answer to that eternal impeachment, that our Church is opposed to reason and inquiry, the name of St Augustine alone ought to be accepted as a sufficient refutation. We are familiar with the derision and scorn which men try to pour on what they are pleased to consider a decaying faith, with neither virile thought nor fanatical enthusiasm to preserve it. We are grown quite accustomed to the cry: "Your torch is extinguished, your day is over; behold, we light it anew at the fire of reason, and like the athletes in the lamp-race of the Athenians, we shall pass that pure fire from hand to hand to the end of time." Our answer is clear, yes, and defiant! "Take your tiny lamp of reason and search the abysses, make your minds a blank from which all pre-conceived or traditionary ideas are blotted out, and go find the truth. We make you a present of all that human ingenuity has devised to help you in your research—the figments of philosophers the

dreams of visionaries, even the solid discoveries in natural science. Take years of research and labour in your own individual meditations and in the dust and mould of the world's libraries. Call aloud to your Gods to hearken to your cries, and rain down light from high Olympus. And when you are old and your hair is grey and your hands tremble, come to us who in the day of your strength you derided. That powerful objection of yours, which you launched so airily and confidently against Christianity, behold here it is, anticipated and answered by St. Augustine fifteen centuries ago; and that brilliant fancy that leaped up like an inspiration, when your brain was dull from much thought and the midnight oil was burning low, why, it passed the lips of St. Augustine in his long conversations with Monica and Alypius near the sea at Ostia, or in those numberless homilies at Hippo when, clustered round his episcopal chair, men wondered and women wept."

There is something sublime in the spectacle of this great mind, stretching far back into the past, and appropriating all the wisdom of the East and of Greece, and then reaching down through long centuries to our time, and colouring the thoughts of men, who cannot fail to admire his commanding genius although they will not accept his authority for their faith. There is nothing local or contracted about his genius. He spoke and wrote for the world, and unto all time; and perhaps the best proof of the importance that the world attaches to his pronouncements is, that there is no author, the authenticity of whose works, and the meaning of whose words are so much questioned. Where he can be quoted, there is no longer controversy. He is one of the supreme judges in the great court where questions of supreme importance are debated, and issues of the mightiest moment are decided, and from his judgment there is no appeal. One of the fiercest controversies that has ever raged in the Church turned

together on the question whether certain propositions were to be found in his writings; and a sect of heretics has built up one of its fundamental doctrines on a single text from his Scriptural Comments, where his words are distorted and his meaning misapprehended.

And yet this great mind bows in humble submission to the Mother and Mistress of the Faithful, and submits his works to her judgment, to be corrected or even suspended from publication, if she thinks that in any way they can favour error or unbelief. Nay, even the Holy Gospels, which were to him as the Bread of Life, and which bear on the very surface indications of their supernatural origin, he will not accept but from her hands. And she, with her great discernment, places her hand on his works, and gives them to the world with her mighty *imprimatur*. And every succeeding Pontiff, who is compelled by the circumstances of his age to note the peculiar and ever-shifting errors that are put before the world disguised under the name of philosophy, points to Augustine and his great pupil Aquinas, as the exponents of her philosophical creed. And well she may. For, in the supposition that she had not the great eternal promises, which are the support of her prerogatives and the credentials of her lofty mission, she might shelter herself behind the work of St. Augustine, and there consider her position impregnable.

Such is our answer to the world! But to those of our own household—those weaklings in the faith, whose beliefs are shaken by every flippant jester, or by a padded article in a review, and who think alas! that they are then only wise when they commence to doubt, we say in all charity and pity, these things, too, passed through the mind of St. Augustine; he saw their falsehood, set them aside, and was at peace.

I have drawn now the shadows and the lights that mark

the life and character of our Saint ; and if I have drawn the shadows too darkly or deeply, it is that the lights may be seen more fully and clearly. Just for a moment I will go back to one calm scene immediately after his conversion, when his mother and he now poured forth their souls freely after the long years of spiritual separation. There is a famous picture by Scheffer familiar to you all in photographs and engravings. It represents that famous evening at Ostia when Monica and Augustine quietly talked over one of those sublime problems that always occupied his mind. Mother and son are seated together—the mother's hands folded in her lap, and her child's hand clasped between them. On the worn features of the mother, and the well-chiselled intellectual features of her son, is peace, deep peace—peace which the world never gives. But insensible to the beauties of nature around them, in that land where every landscape is a sublime picture, the eyes of mother and son are fixed on the skies. Behind the blue dome of immensity is that Being, whose love had surrounded them, whose mercy had exalted them, seeing only the tears of the mother and forgetting the iniquities of the child. These are his own words : " And as our converse drew to this conclusion, and the sweetest conceivable delight of sense in the brightest conceivable earthly sunshine was not to be compared, no, nor even named, with the happiness of that life, we soared with glowing hearts towards the Same, mounting step by step the ladder of the material order, through heaven itself, whence sun and moon and stars shed their radiance upon earth. And still higher did we climb by the staircase of the spirit, thinking and speaking of Thee, and marvelling at Thy works. And so we came to our own minds, and passed beyond them into the region of unfailing plenty, where thou feedest Israel for ever with the food of truth, whose Life is Wisdom, by which all these things come to be, both

the things that have been and the things that shall be. Wisdom itself is not made, but is now what it was, and will be the same for ever ; or rather past and future time do not exist in it, but only Being, because it is eternal. For past and future have no place in that which is eternal. And as we talked and yearned after it, we touched it for an instant with the whole force of our hearts, and we sighed as that foretaste of the spirit left us, and we were forced again to hear the babble of our own tongues, wherein each word had a beginning and an ending. How unlike to The Word, O Lord, which abideth in itself, never growing old, but making all things new. We then said : If the tumult of the flesh were hushed ; hushed these shadows of earth, sea, and sky ; hushed the poles of heaven, yea the very soul itself, which not thinking of itself should surmount itself—hushed all dreams and imaginary revelations, and every tongue and every symbol ; if all that comes and goes were hushed (since they all proclaim to him that hath an ear 'we made not ourselves, He made us Who abideth for ever')—if, having given their message, they too should be hushed, turning our ears only to Him who made them ; and if He should speak, not by them, but for Himself, and we heard His word, not by any tongue of flesh or word of angel, nor with sound of thunder, nor in the dark riddle of similitude—if we heard His voice whom we love in His creatures, but without any intermediary (as we now stretched out and with one flash of thought touched the Eternal Wisdom), if this endured, if all other inferior visions ceased and this alone ravished the beholder—might not eternal life be like this moment of comprehension for which we sighed ? " From the words of our Saint and from his own and his sweet mother's face, we too must look on high. To Him who is on high, whose humility has exalted and given Him a name which is above all names,

our thoughts must soar, our love be directed, our affections centred, if we hope to enjoy the peace of Augustine and Monica here, and call the former our father and our friend, in the presence of his Master and Friend, in the sinless bliss, the perfect peace, the calm joys of our heavenly home.

Mary, the Tower of Ivory.

"Thy neck is as the tower of David, which is built with bulwarks."

THIS title, with which we salute our Blessed Lady in her Litany, appears to be the most expressive of the many titles with which her faithful children address her, as it sums up at once her characteristic virtues, and her principal relations to God and to the world of men. It is founded upon a text* which is part of that singularly beautiful, but very mysterious address of Solomon to his spouse—an address full of poetic imagery and oriental metaphors, the full meaning of which is completely lost to us. But the Fathers of the Church have interpreted it so far, that they are enabled to turn the address of Solomon from his invisible mystic spouse to Mary, the visible mystic spouse of the Holy Ghost, applying to Mary (in the spiritual sense which they bore from the beginning) the words of the Canticle of Canticles.

The tower is a symbol of strength. Whether inserted in the battlemented walls of the city, or built on the outskirts of the kingdom, or as a graceful appendage to the mansion of the noble, its primary purpose is to repel invaders, to break their

* Canticle of Canticles iv. 4.

power, and to afford protection to those who are sheltered beneath it. But strength is not the only quality which the inspired writer attributes to his spouse. Massive, unadorned strength has in it nothing very attractive. It inspires with confidence; but it wins neither our love nor our admiration. And so the inspired writer subdues his metaphor, and calls his spouse not a tower alone—not a tower of colossal proportions—but a tower which, retaining all its strength, powerfully protective of those whom it shelters, and invulnerable to those who assail it, is at the same time brilliant and dazzling from its whiteness—an ornament and a protection, a tower of ivory. It is difficult to ascertain whether even amongst the wealthy nations of the East, there could be such costly things as towers of ivory. We know that ivory was a staple article of commerce with the Tyrians and other wealthy commercial people who dwelt on the shores of the Mediterranean; and it is also ascertained that the Easterns were accustomed to inlay and veneer with ivory the towers which they set up in their vineyards. Whatever be said of the fact, it is evident that the writer of the Canticle had before his mind's eye an object not new to Eastern eyes—a tower of dazzling whiteness—strong, tall, and graceful, upon which the eye could not look when the sunlight was flashed upon it. To this he compared his spouse, and to this the Fathers of the Church unanimously compare Mary, the Tower of the City of David—the Church of God upon earth. Tower of David—Tower of Ivory—Tower of the City of God, its chiefest strength and hope, and Tower of Ivory, for Mary's strength is her purity. Tower of the City of God! The Church of God upon earth has much to be proud of. I do not speak of the pride of men, but I speak of the spiritual exultation which filled the "sons of God" when in the beginning they tasted the first blessings of existence, and sang their first hymn of thanksgiving to the Most High. The Church of God

has much to be proud of in its distinguished possessions, its marvellous privileges, its illustrious history, and that vast contingent of saints it has given to Heaven. God alone has measured the extent of its prerogatives, as He alone can set a value upon His own graces; but apart from the Real Presence amongst us of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament (and that Presence is so awful it would be almost unseemly to speak of it as a privilege), the Church has no treasure so precious as Mary, and no privilege so great as the exclusive privilege of paying her meet and unfailing reverence. And if the Church militant on earth be in spiritual glory a type of the Church triumphant in Heaven, and if it were lawful to apply to it the description which St. John gives of the Holy City, the Heavenly Jerusalem, we might say that neither its walls of jasper stone, nor the City itself of pure gold, nor the foundations of precious stones are comparable to that which is the strength of all, and the protection of all, the Ivory Tower of David. This is the one beauty of the City of God, which attracts the eyes even of those who are without. Mary, Tower of David, Tower of Ivory, is the first glory of the Church of God, that is seen by those whom the grace of the Holy Ghost has brought within view of the Holy City. And if the mighty strength of the Church, built to last for eternity, gives to the wayfarer, who at length finds rest in its bosom, a sense of inviolable security, that security is increased a thousandfold when they find themselves not strangers in their new abode with only a title of adopted citizenship, but heavenly-born children and regarded as such, and as such placed under the special protection of Mary. The eternal promises are the foundation of the Chuch; Peter is the rock upon which the Church is built; Mary is the Ivory Tower raised aloft by God as a sign to the nations that God is here. Deep foundations may remain unseen; the Rock might be hidden by the mighty fabric that God has built upon

it; but the Tower of Ivory, with the sunlight of Heaven for ever playing upon it, must be distinguishable except to those who blind themselves. The science of Theology is not adapted to ordinary minds. Most men have little time and less inclination for examining the abstruse problems of revealed Christianity. But God has condescended to their weakness. He does not lead the majority of men into His truth by the difficult paths of argument and controversy. But whilst He conceals His visible presence from us, He gives us plain indications of that presence; He shows us signs which point infallibly to Him. And such is His Mother, or rather the reverence paid to His Mother. And therefore it is that I say that a man may not know what is the Infallibility of the Church, or the Supremacy of Him on whom the Church is built. But if he possesses anything like a clear conception of what Christianity means, he must see that Mary was the embodiment of all Christian virtues, that where Mary is there is Jesus, for the Son is inseparable from the Mother, and where Mary is reverenced there is God Himself more truly honoured. Now the Catholic Church is the only Church where Mary is honoured. For amongst the Greeks, honour to Mary is only the echo of a lost tradition; and amongst Anglicans it is only a feeble apology for three centuries of unceasing blasphemy; but in the Catholic Church devotion to the Mother of God rests upon principles of Theology that never have been disputed—it is an instinct implanted in the hearts of the children of the Church by the Holy Spirit Himself. It is a tradition that took its rise at the foundation of Christianity; and it has been passed on unbroken from generation to generation, gathering new strength as it advances, impressing itself more clearly on the visible character of the Church, and forming an integral part of its most important doctrines.

But Mary is not only the watchtower of the Church; she is

also a tower of defence to the Church. She not only attracts the eyes of those who are at a distance and leads them to the City of God; she also protects those who have had grace to recognise this sign of the Divinity; she does not leave her clients unprotected and defenceless; they who have once come beneath her shadow have never reason to fear.

She guards the Universal Church of Christ; and protects individuals. She is the Spouse of the Holy Ghost; the Church is the Spouse of her Son; that Son needing no longer her protection, her care has been transferred from Jesus to His Church; and in union with the Holy Ghost, she has from the days of Pentecost watched over the Church, caring for its interests, supporting it in persecution, blessing its labours to extend the empire of her Son, and rewarding it for its marvellous fidelity to herself, by many signal temporal blessings. The history of the Church is full of examples of this protection of the Mother of God. It was not only by the assistance she rendered the Church when in the battle of Lepanto the power of the Turks was broken, that she earned her title "Help of Christians"; the Church has not passed through a single vicissitude without experiencing the power of Mary, who is specially chosen by God to be the agent for fulfilling the eternal promises.

And what a tower of strength is not Mary to her clients? We know that with her there are no impossibilities. Heaven has no grace over which Mary has not control; nor hell a single terror or evil which she cannot change into consolation and blessing for those who implore her aid. Queen of Heaven, Queen of Earth, Queen of Hell—there is no creature in either over which she is not mistress; the angels of Heaven to do her bidding, men on earth to be fashioned as she wills it into saints, and the lost angels in hell to tremble and fear for ever at the sight of her who broke the

power of their master, who crushed his head, and who maintains with him that inexorable enmity which was placed by God in the beginning for His own glory and men's salvation. There is something inexpressibly marvellous in this—that a weak woman should thus tame and subdue the fierce powers of hell. Nothing can give us such an idea of the silent strength of God as this power which He has given to His Mother. When we read of the war of the angels in Heaven, and how the faithful angels, after a sharp struggle flung the rebel angels over the battlements of Heaven into the abyss of hell, and Michael sent his challenge to the universe: "Who is like unto God?" we form great ideas of the power of spirits, and we tremble to think of the mighty conflict that must have taken place when angel was matched against angel, and their splendid intelligences and amazing powers were exercised to the utmost to outwit and defeat each other. But all this struggling and all these efforts, terrible as they are in themselves, proclaim the fact that after all these mighty angels are only creatures, and their mightiest efforts are limited. But when we see Mary, one of a race whose natural powers are simply contemptible in the eyes of angels, exercise a complete and absolute mastery over these powerful spirits, we say at once: "This is the omnipotence of God, so quiet, so silent, and at the same time so overwhelming, all-subduing and irresistible." Angels may struggle amongst themselves, but there is no question of resisting Mary; because the most rebellious cannot dare to resist omnipotence. Struggling and writhing under the feet of Mary—that is the place of the devil for ever. There is no artifice of his so subtle that she does not detect and baffle; there is no attempt upon the souls of men so well-planned or determinedly carried out that she cannot frustrate. There can be no doubt that the power which the devil possesses of hurting us is very great, and the fierce

men is very alarming; we can scarcely move in this world without being tempted to sin; there is no place so sacred in which the enemy of God and man has not spun his foul webs of temptation. The very atmosphere we breathe is tainted. If we were half as sensitive to the evils of the soul as to the evils of the body, we should feel that there is a plague of sin upon the world, and should pass amongst men as in a time of pestilence, each intent upon his own safety, with all his senses sealed, and every aperture closed through which sin might enter the soul. All this is very painful, but it is the test of our faith in God; it is our work for Heaven. And it would fill us, too, with despair, but that there is given to us a power, which, if we only lean upon Mary, will lend us her strength: that strength is the strength of God; to hell it is irresistible—the fiercest temptation of hell it enables us easily to resist; and the petty annoyances of hell it gives us confidence to despise.

But whence has Mary this power? From God, of course, as the source of all sanctity and power. But immediately from that immaculate purity for which, above all creatures of God, she is distinguished. In the natural world, practical men will tell you that "knowledge is power." In the higher supernatural world we say: "Purity is power." What knowledge does for physical advancement, purity does for spiritual advancement. Knowledge gives men dominion over nature; purity gives men dominion over all manner of spiritual evil. It makes men clearsighted to detect evil, and powerful to overcome evil. The more pure a soul is, the more it is a match for hell. Because the more pure a soul is, the more are the grosser elements of nature annihilated, and the spiritual faculties developed. We then have a spirit resisting a spirit, and not a soul clogged with sensuality face to face with those whose power to work evil

is unlimited and unencumbered. There is no comparison between the resistance the devils meet with from pure souls and impure souls. With the impure soul they can do as they please; it is a passive instrument in their hands; they have only to flatter its sensuality and it becomes a willing agent for any wickedness they may suggest. The impure man is a body without a soul; there is not an element of spirituality left in him. All is darkness, lethargy, and death. But the pure soul, that has beaten down nature and spiritualized nature, and cleared it of all its grosser elements, and has ever been working upwards towards perfection has nothing to fear from hell. There is so little of earth about it, so much of Heaven about it, that it is easily mistaken by the devils for an angel. The lost spirits have not forgotten the look, the features, the proportions of Michael and the others who drove them out of Heaven at the command of God. The light and the calmness and the beauty and the strength of the Sons of God have not faded from their memories. And such light, such calmness, such beauty, such strength, they behold again and again, when in this world they meet a soul that has always maintained its purity before God. And on such occasions they do not think of attack, but of flight, for they know that where there is purity there is no weakness, no faintheartedness, no pusillanimity of any kind, but the fortitude, the strength, the courage of Michael. There is no weak, no vulnerable point whatsoever, but an invulnerable panoply of light as that of an angel confirmed in grace. So true is this, that even to worldly men it has become a truth of philosophy. The blind old puritan, John Milton, puts it very beautifully:

> "So dear to Heaven is saintly Chastity,
> That when a soul is found sincerely so,
> A thousand liveried angels lacquey her,
> Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt;
> And in clear dreams and solemn vision

Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear,
Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
Begins to cast a beam on th' outward shape,
The unpolluted temple of the mind,
And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence
Till all be made immortal.'' — *Comus.*

If, then, purity be power, there is no secret in Mary's strength. The spirits of darkness must fear that woman over whom they never have had the slightest power; whose life was more than angelic—conceived immaculate, preserved from sin during life, consecrated to God, without counsel or example, but of her own free will. "Justly," says St. Richard of St. Laurence, "is she called Virgin of Virgins, who was the first who consecrated and vowed her virginity to God without precept, counsel, or example." And if such as preserve themselves pure in this world are promised by our Lord Himself to be as angels in the resurrection of the dead, no one can count the privileges awarded to the Immaculate Queen of Angels, whom God Himself maintained pure and holy as befitted the Mother of Him, before whom the angels themselves are not found pure. Hence is she most truly called "the lily among thorns," the one fair flower, when the world, in the eyes of God, was a barren, unfruitful, unsightly waste.

It is a special privilege of the most devoted clients of Mary to be able, not merely to lead pure lives themselves, but also to give others an inclination towards the practice of this difficult virtue. It was said of St. John Berchmans, whose watchword was: "The Mother of God is my Mother also," that he breathed purity to such an extent that the mere sight of him once cured a poor victim of terrible slavery to vice; and when this was told to Cardinal Bellarmine, he

remarked that St. Aloysius also had this wonderful gift, and both these young saints must have got their strange power direct from our Lady, whose special privilege it was to inspire purity by the sight of her Immaculate face.

From afar, then, does the Ivory Tower beckon us beneath its shadow. There in perfect peace and security shall the spotless flowers of virtue grow and flourish in our souls. And if, as a trophy of victory, all "the bucklers, the armour of valiant men," hang around it, may we not hope that the tenderer trophies of lowly virtue may there also find a place, and that we may have a share in adding to the triumph, as we have had a share in the blissful protection of our Mother and our Queen?

Mary, the Glory of Israel.

"Ave! gratia plena! Dominus tecum."

I.

THERE is something very remarkable in the persistence with which the Church puts before us the example of our holy Mother. There is a feeling about the Blessed Virgin, common to each age of the Church, not often expressed, because it is so well understood, that she is "the Glory of Israel, the honour of her people"—the great peerless Queen by whose exaltation God has made more than atonement to our nature for the humility of our birth. The last and lowliest of the house of Juda became the first and incomparably the greatest of the daughters of God. Even when a Jewish maiden she had reached the highest height of sanctity that had been attained upon earth since the fall of Adam; but when the superabundant graces of the Holy Spirit were poured out upon her, when she had become the Mother of God, no limits (short of Infinity) could be set to her sanctity; and when she stood under the Cross on Calvary, or was borne to Heaven by Angels, we think of her, not as one holy, for her sanctity has long since gone beyond the reach of our imagination; we think of her only as one completely lost in God. Now, this great Queen belongs peculiarly to the

Church of God; the Church claims her as an exclusive possession. She does not belong to the old Dispensation—she completed it, and fulfilled its figures. She does not belong to the Angelic Host; she was human as we. She belongs to the Church of God, and the Church of God appreciates the great privilege of possessing her; and if ever we could be tempted to repine at the meanness of our origin, we will find a consolation in the fact that we have a representative in Heaven, and she is second only to God. And so, reverence and devotion to the Mother of God are inseparable from the Catholic Church; she occupies a very large portion of the theology of the Church; she has attracted to her in every age the eyes of the great thinkers of the Church. When weary and pained and confused by the labour of looking upon the great mysteries of the Godhead, and despondent from a sense of utter helplessness to understand anything of God but that He is unintelligible, they have turned with some sense of relief to Mary. That is a study easier to human intellect, and yet it is a study that leads to God, for she is the noblest manifestation of God's power—the crown of His creation. His inner life is unknown, unintelligible; but there is a reflex of that life in a creature. It wants infinity, of course, just as the reflection of a face in a mirror wants substance, but it is clear and well defined and never blurred, nor marred, nor defaced by the breath of sin.

And as this great Queen, as it were, presides over the schools of Catholic theology, so too she presides over every solemnization of every mystery of Catholic belief. If it is some great mystery relating to the Most Holy Trinity, in looking up to that highest height of Heaven, where that great mystery is enthroned in unimagined glory, we cannot help letting our eyes fall just a little lower, and there is Mary. Of course, that little means infinity, but we only think of it as the foot of the throne of God. If it be some

mystery connected with the Incarnate Word, we must come down to earth, and wherever we find the Son of God, the Mother is sure to be at His side. If it is one of the saints of God whom the Church is honouring we cannot help looking a little higher than the saint, and there is Mary. And so she is everywhere present to the mind of the Catholic Church. But besides this general sense of our Lady's presence, and this general reverence which the Church pays her, there are special feasts instituted in her honour. Some mystery is commemorated in which she was the special agent of Providence; some of her many virtues are selected, and it must have been difficult to make the selection, and we are asked to imitate them afar off; some choice grace with which God endowed her is remembered with thanksgiving; some remarkable attribute with which God has gifted her demands a yearly burst of astonishment, or jubilant chorus from the lips of the Church. Some episode in her life is chosen, as, for instance, that of her Presentation in the Temple, and we are asked if we do not see in that apparently slight unimportant event, the working of the Spirit of God and the miracles of grace He effects in a soul that He has chosen to Himself, and that yields itself freely to this guidance of His inspiration.

The life of the Blessed Virgin was a series of these striking episodes. The Immaculate Conception and the Assumption closed and opened the series. The morning of the Annunciation and the evening on Calvary were the great events that marked its regular gradation, and between these are interlined, as it were, minor events—minor in proportion—but important, inasmuch as they were preparations for the others, and interesting; the only pity is that we do not know more of Mary the Child, Mary the Mother, and Mary the Childless Widow.

How wonderful was Mary in her childhood! Three years had gone by and Joachim and Anne took their sacred charge

to the temple, and consecrated her to the service of God. The wonderful maiden stands in the presence of God, devotes herself to His service in His temple, and in the presence of His minister, vows to God that virginity whose remarkable preservation was a favour second only to, and consequent on the great privilege of her Divine Maternity. There was no great need for that formal consecration and those formal vows. God had consecrated her to Himself from the beginning. She was now setting her seal upon that consecration. She had corresponded with God's graces from the first instant of her life. That great vow of obedience she made when Gabriel revealed to her the design of the Most Holy Trinity : " Behold the handmaid of the Lord—Be it done unto me according to thy word," was but the verbal expression of the inward acts of submission and obedience to the Divine will she had ever been making. If God from the beginning consecrated her to Himself, she upon her part, from the beginning, consecrated herself to God. She had scarcely breathed when God set her aside for Himself; but she almost anticipated God by pronouncing with the first breath He gave her her entire consecration to Him.

II.

The first glimpse we catch of her in the Holy Scriptures is at the moment of the Aununciation, and she has paid that memorable vow of obedience to God, which is rewarded by the fulfilment of the eternal promises. Moreover, in the pages of Holy Writ, Mary is ever at the side of Jesus, from Bethlehem to Calvary. " There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary, His Mother." And as a holy writer has remarked, you can no more imagine Mary coming down from Calvary during that hour, than a priest descending from the Altar in the midst of the Holy Sacrifice. Again, the sign appears in the visions of John; and at last

is fixed in Heaven before the mind of the Universal Church, the Mother still inseparable from her Child, guarding her Child and blessing the world.

It is sometimes said that in the New Testament we find no mention of Mary. And when that objection was advanced some years ago by the leaders of the High Church School, it was promptly answered by Dr. Newman: "Mary is mentioned by one writer only in the New Testament; but he has more than canonized her." And, in truth, to one who carefully reads the Holy Scriptures this passage in the Apocalypse referred to is so eloquent in praise of Mary, and assigns her such an exalted place in the great mystery of the Incarnation, that no words of men, however seemingly exaggerated, can equal them in their tribute of praise to Mary. There have been eloquent preachers of Mary's privileges; there have been orators who have exhausted all the secrets of the science to speak adequately of her; but even the fervent, impassioned writings of St. Bernard fall far short of the simple sentences in the Apocalypse that were penned by John, who lived twelve years with Mary in Ephesus, and who, by his filial devotion to her, and the purity of his life, deserved from God the privilege of seeing the place that Mary possessed in Heaven.

When Protestant controversialists advance objections against Catholic doctrine and practice, a certain difficulty arises in answering them, which difficulty is attributable to the fact that, as Catholics and Protestants have no first principles in common, and have views of supernatural things which are diametrically opposite, logical argument becomes utterly impossible. In these unhappy times, too, in which we live, the foundations of certitude, historical or other, have been swept away so completely, truths and facts have been so distorted, the canons of Scriptural and historical criticism have been so unwarrantably changed, that discussion is completely out of the

question, and the wonder to us is that they, who outside the Church have no infallible guide, but are for ever blown about by every wind of doctrine, do not settle down at once into a state of lasting and confirmed scepticism. When one, for example, is gravely told that Catholics are Protestants and Protestants Catholics, that the Church of Rome originated yesterday, and is the newest of all the Churches, and the origin of the Church of England is lost in the twilight of fable; that the Sacrifice of the Mass is daily offered in Protestant churches, when only a few years ago it was treason-felony, and the penalty of it was hanging, quartering, and disembowelling, as Tyburn can testify; when the saints that have been blasphemed for centuries are now claimed as the private property of devout Anglicans, when we are told that St. Patrick, who prayed for his people that their faith may not fail, was a Protestant, and the many other fables that pass for God's truth with imbeciles, we are bewildered, and to speak the truth, an answer satisfactory to these ingenious people is not to be found. Nor do we withhold from them the tribute of our admiration at their wonderful ingenuity and unblushing boldness. Thus, in our childhood, we stood open-mouthed at the cool effrontery of the market mountebank, and the preternatural science of the conjuror. But never in our warmest moments of admiration did we consider the profession of the one or the other respectable.

Now, there is an objection, which has done good service to Protestantism in its time, that the Catholic Church withholds the Sacred Bible from the laity, and forbids them to read it. It has been well remarked that the Bible in the hands of Protestants and the Bible in the hands of Catholics, is not one, but two books. The view which we take of the Mahometan Koran and of the Christian Bible is not more different than the views which Catholics and Protestants take of God's

written Word. To the Catholic it is one of the two great repositaries of the Revelation, of which His Church is the guardian and dispenser; to the Protestant it is a book dropped from Heaven, to be taken up, read, examined, and explained according to the intellectual capacities of individuals. To the Catholic it is the epistle the Holy Ghost sends to every soul; and no Catholic takes up or lays down the Sacred Book with levity. To the Protestant it is a Book of Mysteries, which affords a pleasant intellectual exercise; and with a view to the improvement of mankind, its most sacred texts are flung about the roads or written on the walls of railway stations. The Catholic is bound to believe its inspiration, or cease to be a Catholic; the Protestant, like Dr. Colenso, may deny its inspiration and yet remain a Protestant. So that it is perfectly safe to predict that as in the past the Catholic Church was the custodian of the Sacred Book before the word "Protestant was invented, or such a thing as private interpretation heard of, and as at the present time she alone has preserved it in its integrity, so the time is not far distant when she will have the exclusive possession of that Sacred Record, believing its inspiration, and demanding that belief from her followers, when the rest of the world will have become advanced enough to hold that the Sacred Histories are fables, the Sacred Prophecies are ravings, and that the Sacred Figure, Christ Jesus, the Centre and the Light of all, the Lesson of all its histories, the Subject of all its prophecies, has become the Philosopher of the East, the "pious Man" of Jerusalem.

Now, it necessarily results from this doctrine of private interpretation, that the Protestant regards the Sacred Book as one whose language and meaning is so plain, simple, and intelligible that "he who runs may read." The Babel of tongues which they have made it speak, and the confusion of doctrines which they have extracted from it, only serve apparently to

confirm them in the belief that man's limited reason unassisted and unillumined by the grace of the Holy Ghost, is able to measure itself with the mind of God, as shown in the Sacred Volume. Mere intellectual acuteness, and the street-preacher prides himself upon possessing that as well as the hooded Doctor or Bishop, is thought to be quite a sufficient accomplishment for understanding the mysteries of the Bible. "The Word of God," say they, "is plain and intelligible," forgetting two sentences of Christ: "I give thanks to Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because Thou hast hidden those things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones." "To you it is given," He said to His disciples, "to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to the rest in parables, that seeing, they may not see, and hearing they may not understand."

Now, to the Catholic, on the other hand, the Bible is a book of mystery, every word of which needs to be illumined by the light of the Holy Spirit, before it can be properly understood. Though Catholic commentators have been labouring from the beginning, and expending all their energies in putting forth expositions of the Sacred Scripture, though saints and doctors have spent their lives in the study of it, there is no one that can for a moment deny that their successes have been but very partial, that there are hidden meanings in Scripture that can never be discovered, intricacies that can never be disentangled, correspondences between the Old and New Testaments that have never been noticed, and large suggestions of doctrine that have not been utilized by the world. The Bible is most of all a suggestive book. It seldom states truths positively and plainly. It conceals more than it reveals. In truth the superficial and apparent meaning of Holy Scriptures is not its meaning at all; you have to dive deep beneath the surface before you find the truth.

III.

Now, we shall find an illustration of this by examining one subject upon which Catholics and Protestants are avowedly opposed, and which I introduce here as it is appropriate to the present time. The Blessed and ever Immaculate Mother of God has been styled by the Church the enemy of all heresy; and it is wonderful with what eagerness and uniform perseverance heresiarchs accept the challenge, and direct their most frantic attacks against her. As they rise up, one after another, from the mouth of hell, they fix their gaze intently upon her as if they recognised in her their chiefest enemy, and from their birth to their death, they never cease to rage against her. Amongst the very best of Protestants in this country the name of the Mother of God would not be mentioned without an apology. It is regarded as something evil; and even those who are disposed to accept other Catholic verities, cannot conquer their unnatural repugnance to honour the Mother of God. This is very suggestive—that she whom the Scripture itself calls the Mother of Jesus should be ignored by men professing to be followers of Jesus; and more suggestive still, that the only way they can discover for honouring the Son is to dishonour the Mother. And let no one say that a better feeling is growing up amongst them. There is, I am aware, an affected reverence for Mary, professed by the Anglicans of the day; but that it is only affected is provable by the fact that when some years ago Pusey published his *Eirenicon*, he reduced all his objections against the Catholic Church to the Church's devotion to Mary; and so bitter were his animadversions upon the Mother of God, that Dr. Newman, in his reply, remonstrated with him: "You, yourself, in your pamphlet, have not said one kind thing of God's Mother."

Now, it is the fashion to throw all the blame of this infamous conduct upon the Scriptures. "The Scriptures," say they, "are silent about Mary. Why do you expect us to speak of her? It is for you, Catholics, who accept tradition as well as Scripture for your rule of Faith, to believe what you please of the Virgin. But the Protestant's sole rule of faith is the Scriptures, and in the Scriptures I do not find Mary mentioned more than twelve times, and then not in any extraordinary terms of praise—rather in terms which seem to disparage her."

Now, we freely admit the comparative silence of Scripture about the Blessed Virgin. But what then? Is the Bible a complete biography of individuals? Does it profess to deliver eulogiums on every saint? Or, rather, is it not intended, the New Testament especially, to form the rudimental type of the dogmatic teaching of the Church? But what does the Scripture say of her? It says more of her than has been said by her most enthusiastic servants upon earth. It makes her the Mother of God; it shows the high esteem in which she was held by Heaven, and it attributes to her a share in the work of Redemption, so that the very title "Co-redemptress," that St. Alphonsus has given her, cannot appear extravagant. Take the Annunciation. What does that mean and what does it imply? The Trinity have selected her to be the Mother of the Eternal Word. A dignity unparalleled! A dignity unequalled! Who is the ambassador of the Trinity to the Virgin? Gabriel, one of the leaders in the first hierarchy of Heaven! How does he deliver his message? With language that could only be addressed to his Queen, and with a demeanour a little less subdued than that which he exhibits in the courts of Heaven. What does that message from the Trinity imply as to the antecedents of Mary? It implies her Immaculate Conception, her unsullied virginity, and her perfect sin-

lessness. What does that interview reveal in Mary? Her prudence, her modesty, her humility, her faith, her obedience. And who is she thus exalted? Only a Jewish maiden—a child of fifteen.

What does the Visitation reveal? The heroic charity of Mary. When the aged Elizabeth meets the child of fifteen, what does she do? What Protestant pride will not do. She humbles herself before her, and salutes her as the Mother of God. "Whence is this to me that the Mother of my God should visit me?" What are the effects of Mary's visit? The regeneration, through Mary's instrumentality, of the Precursor in his mother's womb. What a light it throws upon her Immaculate Conception, a privilege greater than that she bestowed upon John. And under what new character do we behold Mary? The inspired prophetess, singing God's love and mercy for her, in a strain unlike to anything yet heard upon earth, prophesying, but Protestants take a pleasure in refuting the prophecy, that all generations shall call her blessed. Surely, that sublime *Magnificat* makes Mary at once what the Church has called her: "Queen of Prophets."

Nothing is told of her from her birth to her Annunciation. True. Because from her birth to her Annunciation was passed in the strictest religious seclusion, and we know that the religious life affords but few details that could make a biography interesting. Then came the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Purification, and the Presentation in the Temple, the wonderful words of Simeon, the Flight into Egypt, the return from Egypt, the Finding in the Temple, the return to Nazareth. The life of Jesus from this return until He commenced His mission is summed up in the words of the Evangelist: "He was subject to them." And this gives us at once a key to the scope and object of Scrip-

ture. It is as senseless to argue that Christ ceased to live on earth, or that He lost His Divinity during these eighteen years, because Scripture is silent about them, as to argue that the Mother of God was but little esteemed because we have not got the history of her life, and a panegyric upon her dignity and virtues in Scripture. In fact the silence of the Holy Scriptures is a strong testimony that Catholics take no exaggerated view of her character and prerogatives. Her life was essentially hidden and retired. She was not called to any public mission. Scripture says nothing of the hidden life of Christ. Does anyone, therefore, conclude that it was either uneventful or unimportant? Does the lofty dignity of His character suffer because there is no recorded incident in Scripture that would show us how His Life was spent? By no means. He was doing His Father's will in secret, as He afterwards did it in His missionary life. So with His Immaculate Mother. What was her special vocation? To be with Jesus. To rejoice in His joys, to suffer when He suffered, to triumph in His glory. Was there an instant in her life in which she was really separated from Him? No! and the Evangelist knowing this spoke but little of Mary, for the idea of Jesus carries with it the idea of Mary. And after His Ascension what was the place of Mary in the Church? She was the Centre of the Apostolic College, when the Church was set up on the day of Pentecost; and Christ provided for His Mother's welfare upon earth by appointing to be her guardian the gentle Apostle, who, of all the sons of men, was most beloved by Him.

I say nothing now of the Canticle of Canticles, the prophecy about the woman in Genesis, or the vision of the woman in the Apocalypse. I affirm that Scripture is not silent either upon the character or the prerogatives of

Mary; but is, on the contrary, most explicit in assigning to her a dignity which is infinitely beyond anything ever reached by man; of which the angels themselves are not worthy. I affirm, moreover, that there is abundant evidence even in the words of Scripture to show how deeply she was loved and reverenced by Christ; that she held a high position in the early Church, and that she was revered by the Apostles as their Queen and the Mother of their Divine Master.

Taking Scripture as a whole there is as much in it of the Blessed Virgin as about the Holy Ghost or the Blessed Trinity; and her office and privileges are much more clearly shown than the offices and dignities of the Paraclete or the Trinity.

These considerations go far towards showing that the only deduction which Protestants have ever drawn from Scripture on the subject of the Blessed Virgin is a deduction false, erroneous, irreverent to God, the Mother of God, and the Holy Scriptures themselves. And it certainly ought to show them that their treatment of Scripture is utterly at variance with the designs of God; that the hidden meanings of His Sacred Word are not to be discovered by light, superficial reading; that the Holy Scriptures are not, therefore, to be put lightly and unguardedly into the hands of all; but with those safeguards that the labour and learning of ages and the wisdom of the Church provides. For Faith is not opinion; and the truths of Faith are not open questions which Christians may claim the right to differ upon, or to make the subjects of discussion. And no precaution can be deemed excessive where Faith is imperilled. I say, therefore, once and for ever, that the Catholic Church does not withhold the Bible from the people. On the contrary she recommends most earnestly its use. She invites her

children to read the Holy Bible, to contemplate the person, the character, the words of our Divine Lord; to drink in the wisdom that is contained in the Bible, to meditate upon its lessons, to follow its counsels, to practise its precepts. But she does not put it into the hands of all indiscriminately, nor into the hands of any without a safeguard.

Persons especially whose minds are untrained in human and divine learning, are very much in need of assistance in the interpretation of Holy Scripture; and even the learned are in danger of wresting, and do often wrest, the meaning of the sacred text to their own destruction. Thus, for all persons, whether learned or simple, there can be no better safeguard against error and delusion than the light which is afforded by the articles of the Catholic Faith, interpreted by the spirit of an ever-living and ever-watchful Catholic Church.

Devotion to the Spouse of Mary.

AS the life of St. Joseph was a hidden life upon earth, so devotion to St. Joseph, deep and ardent though it always has been, has been hidden in the Church for centuries. It was reserved for Pius IX.—Pius, the priest of the Sacred Heart, and the preacher of Mary's privileges—to bring St. Joseph more prominently before the faithful, thus re-uniting, as it were, in the eyes of the faithful, the Sacred Trinity upon earth, the Holy Family of the House of Nazareth, Jesus and Mary and Joseph. In the Apostolic Decree, which constituted St. Joseph Patron of the Universal Church, it is stated, "that the Church has always most highly honoured and praised the most blessed Joseph, next to his Spouse, the Virgin Mother of God, and has besought his intercession in time of trouble."

The development of doctrine and devotion in the Church, however, was necessarily very slow. For centuries the whole attention of the Church was directed to maintaining the true doctrines about the Incarnation. This was the fundamental truth of Christianity, and this was the most frequently and violently attacked. The God-Man, given by His own love and the charity of the Father to the Church, was the precious treasure upon which, during the early years of her existence, all her attention was lavished. All the marvellous mysteries

wound round that central mystery of the Incarnation, had to be explained ; and all the attacks, open and insidious, that sought to detract from the truth of that mystery and the honour of God, had to be repelled. By degrees, when those controversies on the Incarnation had subsided, and the Church had a breathing time,—without ever forgetting her Spouse, the Son, she directed her attention to the Mother ; and by degrees, thinking them over first in her own deep mind, she put before her faithful truth after truth, and dogma after dogma, about the Mother—her royal dignity, her Divine Maternity, her rich prerogatives—until, in our own age, she reached the primary truth of all, that the Mother had never known sin, and the reality of her position was recognised—a Virgin and sinless. "And thus," as a holy priest has written, "the adoration of Jesus and the devotion to Mary took their places immovably in the sense of the faithful, and in the practical system of the Church, one shedding light upon the other, and both instructing, illuminating, nourishing, and sanctifying the people."

The claims of the All-Holy Son and His Virginal Mother being satisfied, the Church was able to turn her attention to the guardian of both, the father of the household at Nazareth. We have said that the Church is a type of Mary, and there can be no doubt that Mary is the teacher of the Church. When, therefore, the truth of her Son's Incarnation was placed beyond doubt, and any honour paid to St. Joseph could not prejudice the Divine origin of her Child, the Church of God learned from her teacher's lips the dignity and the holiness of Joseph, and gathered from her heart deep feelings of love and gratitude to him. Mary's Divine Maternity protected and confirmed the truth of our Divine Lord's origin ; but by a wise decree the Church did not publicly preach the dignity of St. Joseph until the truth of

the Incarnation was put beyond the cavils of heretics, lest the presence of St. Joseph might prejudice the exclusive right of the Eternal Father to the paternity of the Son. Devotion to an earthly father, even though he were only foster-father, might have given the enemies of Jesus Christ a pretence for denying His eternal generation from the Father. We must not, therefore, be surprised to find that public devotion to St. Joseph was not established in the Church as early as devotion to the Blessed Virgin, because the honour of our Divine Lord is to be maintained, whoever should suffer ; and whereas Mary's Divine Motherhood was always the surest protection of the honour of the Son, devotion to St. Joseph would have been seized upon by captious heretics as a proof that the Church was regardless of that first truth of the Incarnation, that Christ had no earthly father, as St. Athanasius declares—"Born of the Father before all ages, born of a Mother in time."

But although the Church's devotion to St. Joseph was not explicitly declared until the thirteenth century, there can be no doubt that his claims to the reverence of the faithful were fully acknowledged even in the earliest ages. It is to the East that common opinion traces the origin of devotion to St. Joseph. Before St. Athanasius in the fourth century sent missionaries into Abyssinia to instruct the Copts in the rites of the Church of Alexandria, the sojourn of the Holy Family in Egypt was commemorated in Abyssinia, and a special festival was kept in honour of St. Joseph. So, too, amongst the Christians of Syria, so ancient is the devotion that there is no record of its introduction amongst them. There can be no doubt, too, that in the Greek Church the devotion is of great antiquity, as may be gathered from their hymns, and the custom that everywhere prevailed in Greece of calling children by the name of Joseph.

The history of the introduction of devotion to St. Joseph into the West is instructive. Father Faber, indeed, is of opinion that the devotion sprang up in the West itself—in the South of France. "It arose," he says, "from a Confraternity in the white city of Avignon, and was cradled by the swift Rhone, that river of martyr-memories, that runs by Lyons and Arles, and flows into the same sea that laves the shores of Palestine. The land which the contemplative Magdalen had consecrated by her hermit life, and whence the songs of Martha's school of virgins had been heard praising God, and where Lazarus had worn a mitre instead of a grave cloth; it was there that he who was so marvellously Mary and Martha combined, first received the glory of his devotion."

There can be no doubt now, however, that the great majority of ecclesiastical writers trace the devotion to the East, and attribute its introduction into Europe to the Carmelite Order. And with the introduction of this devotion into the West, came another—devotion to the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar; and from this, it has been remarked that it was Mary brought Joseph before the world, and Joseph brought Jesus; the children of our Lady of Mount Carmel introduced into Europe devotion to St Joseph, and devotion to St. Joseph was followed by devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. This was the order of events. In 1208, Blessed Juliana had her wonderful vision, which moved Urban IV. in 1214 to establish the feast of the Blessed Sacrament. In 1215 the Fourth Council of Lateran declared that in the Holy Eucharist, "the bread is transubstantiated into the Body of Christ, and the wine into His Blood, by Divine power." Honorius III. ascended the pontifical throne in 1216, and during his pontificate the Carmelites passed into Europe, introducing devotion to St. Joseph, and Honorius III. was

commanded by our Blessed Lady in a vision to recognise and solemnly to approve them. And half a century had not gone by when the solemn office and feast of the Blessed Sacrament were established, and devotion to our Divine Lord and His earthly guardian had spread through the Universal Western Church. A century later the greatest doctors of the Church exerted all their learning and eloquence to propagate this devotion to St. Joseph. Albertus Magnus, the teacher of St. Thomas, composed an office in his honour; before his time another Dominican, Brother Bartholomew of Trent, had written his biography. In 1416, whilst the Council of Constance was sitting, and the legates of the Holy See, twenty Cardinals, two hundred Bishops, and all the doctors and theologians of the Church, were earnestly debating the best means to stem the torrent of corruption that was devastating the Church, Gerson, the Chancellor of the University of Paris, appeared before the Fathers, and suggested devotion to St. Joseph as the most effectual remedy for the evil. He argued that St. Joseph was the guardian of Christ, and he whom Christ obeyed on earth, still retains an authority of affection over Christ in Heaven; and thus his wishes, like the wishes of Mary, are commands, and his intercession is all-powerful. These words were received as the words of one who had a mission from Heaven, and, as devotion to St. Joseph spread in the Church, the troubles of the Church one by one, disappeared. In less than a year perfect peace was restored; the distractions of schisms and dissensions ceased; and, under the mild patronage of St. Joseph, the ever-suffering Church had its history of persecution broken by a momentary peace, which she seldom. and only at rare intervals, enjoys.

Time went on, and now it was not a passing schism, but the most fearful heresy that desolated the Church; it was

not a spark of hell-fire, but an eruption ; but devotion to St. Joseph lived and was fostered in the Church by the greatest of his devoted clients, St. Teresa ; and when many of the nations of Europe rejected Christ by rejecting His Church, the Child and His Foster-father passed away into heathen lands ; and as at the passing of the Child in His father's arms into Egypt, the idols trembled and fell, so heathenism disappeared where Jesus and Joseph were preached by their priests, and whole kingdoms were evangelised and won over to God. "The contemplative," says Father Faber, "took up the devotion, and fed upon it : the active laid hold of it, and nursed the sick and fed the hungry in its name. The working people fastened upon it ; for both the Saint and the devotion were of them. The young were drawn to it, and it made them pure ; the aged rested on it, for it made them peaceful. St. Sulpice took it up, and it became the spirit of the secular clergy ; and when the great Society of Jesus had taken refuge in the Sacred Heart, and the Fathers of the Sacred Heart were keeping their lamp burning ready for the resurrection of the Society, devotion to St. Joseph was their stay and consolation, and they cast the seeds of a new devotion to the Heart of Joseph which will one day flourish and abound. So it gathered into itself orders and congregations ; and high and low, young and old, ecclesiastical and lay, schools and confraternities, hospitals, orphanages, and penitentiaries, everywhere holding up Jesus, everywhere hand in hand with Mary, everywhere the refreshing shadow of the Eternal Father. Then when it had filled Europe with its odour, it went over the Atlantic, plunged into the damp umbrage of the backwoods, embraced all Canada, became a mighty missionary power, and tens of thousands of savages filled the forests and the rolling prairies at sun-down with hymns to St Joseph."

Such is a brief outline of the history of this wonderful devotion. And such is the way that God has chosen to recompense the protector of Jesus and Mary. The hidden life of Nazareth is changed for the glory of Heaven, and the worship of God's Church upon earth. The meek and lowly Joseph is Patron of the Universal Church. So deep was his humility upon earth that he seems to us to be no more than the unconscious agent of the miracles of Heaven ; and he little knew that for the fulfilment of the high functions God had entrusted to him, his soul had been fitted with transcendent virtues ; and that in after ages learned doctors of the Church would study eagerly his life and his character, knowing well that in both they would discover traces of the omnipotent work of the Holy Spirit. He must have been most unconscious of his sanctity during life, and now we have saints far advanced in spiritual life, sitting at his feet to learn sanctity, for they know that he who on earth and in heaven is nearest to Christ, is likest unto Christ, and that to be like unto Joseph is also to be like unto Jesus. Who was more humble, more hidden, than the Carpenter of Nazareth? Yet, behold the great wisdom of the Church does not separate him in glory from those with whom he was associated in misery. But throughout the Church devotion to St. Joseph is spreading, laying hold of all hearts, and subduing them,—not the hearts only of the young, or the poor and the lowly, whose life is like to his ; but even saints, as I have said, are happy to bring themselves under his sweet influence, and mighty schemes for the sanctification of souls are placed under his protection, and difficult problems are submitted to him for solution, and grave doctors have often appealed to the Foster-father of Jesus for guidance and assistance.

We have been often told that the best way to honour the saints is to imitate the virtues of the saints. I do not know

which of St. Joseph's virtues I should put forward for imitation, but I think it will be appropriate for us to imitate rather the life of St. Joseph, and to take upon ourselves that responsibility laid by the Eternal Father on St. Joseph, that is, the guardianship of our Divine Lord. Now, in an especial manner, St. Joseph was the guardian of the Divine Infancy. It is only as a child that we ever see Jesus by the side of St. Joseph —only as an Infant does He lie in the arms of Joseph. Now, the Blessed Sacrament is the most perfect type of the Infancy of our Lord ; for it is in the Blessed Sacrament that Jesus leads that retired, hidden and helpless life that He led as a Child of Nazareth. Here, then, is the Church transformed into Nazareth, Jesus, as hidden and helpless as there, and we, the Josephs and the Marys, the watchers and protectors of our hidden God. With what love and reverence did not Joseph guard his treasure ! How grateful he felt to God for the great privilege extended to him ! How often did he look into himself, asking his humility, why he had been chosen out of thousands. With what looks of tender love did he not gaze upon the face of the Divine Child. And this untiringly. From the moment he saw Jesus lying in the arms of His Mother in Bethlehem till Jesus closed his eyes on earth, and opened them to the Beatific Vision in Heaven, never did Joseph relax his care, never for an instant did his love grow cold, never did his interest waver, never did his reverence for Jesus abate. These must be our feelings, too, in the day and in the watches of the night. The same treasure is confided to us, that was confided to Joseph. Let our love be as great, let our diligence be as unremitting. It was the life-long labour of Joseph, and he did not weary of it because it was a labour of love to him. The years of infancy, the years of boyhood, the years of riper life went by, but Joseph was unwearied. Through the abject poverty of Bethlehem, through

the gentle and sweet simplicities of Nazareth, through the dread trials of the desert, through the secresies of the sojourn in Egypt, his faith and love pierced through the thick veil of utter helplessness in which the omnipotence of God was shrouded; and his life was one long alternation of protection and prayer, of patronage and suppliance, of gentle watchfulness over his precious charge, and lowly prostration before the Child, who was the Mind and the Providence of the Universe. Ah! that we had St. Joseph's faith! We, too, whilst spreading over the veiled and lowly surroundings of our Sacramental God, our reverential protection, would abase ourselves before His revealed Divinity, and humble ourselves with the awful thought that the Eternal actually condescended to demand our protective love. Were we true to this solemn and awful trust, perhaps we might have a hope that the death-bed of St. Joseph would be ours. Perhaps, it would not be too presumptuous to expect that our death-bed would be blessed by his Foster-Child's presence; that our head would be upheld in our agony by Him Whom so often we have held helpless in our hands and on our lips; that the death-moisture on our brows might be wiped away by the gentle fingers of her who cooled the fever of death in her Spouse; that, in a word, we might have God's greatest grace—a happy death, and that it would be given to us by our Divine Master for our love and fidelity to His Foster-father and protector, St. Joseph.

The Holy Apostles, Peter and Paul.

OUR next subject of consideration will be the two great saints who were specially chosen to co-operate with the Most High in founding His Church upon earth, and who ended their lives by a glorious martyrdom. Every nation and community upon earth acknowledges a traditional duty, which is never lost sight of under any circumstances,—the duty of holding in grateful remembrance the founders of that particular society, or those who contributed in a marked manner to its welfare. They are regarded in the same way as children of a home regard the father and mother; the society traces its corporate existence to its founder, as the child traces his existence to his parents; and, similarly, a filial affection is generated and lives in that society as long as it continues to exist; and that filial affection grows with the progress and extension of the society; all its success being attributed to him who laid the germs of success in its foundation. If this be true, therefore, even of secular societies, how much more true must it be of that vast spiritual society, the Church of God upon earth, which knows no limits of time or place, but whose influence is spread over all the world, and extends into eternity. And, therefore, the

Church of God holds for ever in gratefullest remembrance her first Chief Pastor and her first Doctor, St. Peter and St. Paul. Peter, the first of that long chain of Pontiffs who have been thought worthy to represent God upon earth, by ruling that kingdom which He purchased with His Blood; and Paul, the vessel of election, who extended that kingdom into Gentile lands, and gave the Church that first great impetus which has resulted in its Catholicity. Peter, chosen from the moment that Jesus laid his eyes upon him to be Chief of the College of Apostles, and to whose love for His Divine Master was given the privilege of feeding the flock of Christ, and of confirming his own brethren in the faith; and Paul, chosen to carry the name of Jesus before the world, to whose prompt and ready obedience was given the privilege of illustrating and explaining that faith, so that his works should be a repertory, a store-house of Divine Wisdom, to which the Church would always have recourse. Peter, who erred by excess of zeal, and fell into denial of his Master by venturing where the Spirit of God did not call him, and Paul, who erred by excess of zeal, who persecuted Christ Himself and the servants of Christ by a misdirected love of God. Peter converted by a look from the eyes of Jesus; Paul converted by a word from the lips of Jesus. Peter, whose contrition furrowed his cheeks by the tears which he shed; Paul, whose contrition was lost in his overwhelming love for God. Peter, the fisherman of Galilee, called by Jesus to be the fisher of men; Paul, the tent-maker of Tarsus, called by the same Jesus to spread among the Gentiles the tent of the Church of God, according to the prophecy of Isaias: "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and stretch out the skins of thy tabernacles. Spare not, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes, for thou shall pass on to the right hand and to the left, and thy children shall inherit the Gentiles and inhabit

be desolate cities." Peter, the Rock on which the Church for ever rests; Paul, the Lamp with which the Church for ever is illuminated. Peter, infallible, as the Vicar of Christ, and inspired, as an Apostle; Paul, infallible, because inspired. Peter, depository of the Faith; Paul, doctor and commentator of the Faith—both specially loved by God; both gifted with the highest graces of Heaven; both called to the highest and holiest offices, loving each other during life and undivided in death—these are the great Saints, whom the Church specially honours in a single celebration.

The Church has always been steadfast in attributing to St. Peter a pre-eminence over the other Apostles; and this practice of the Church is authorized by the practice of our Blessed Lord as narrated in the Gospel. St. Peter was the brother of Andrew, and it was through Andrew he was called to follow Christ. Andrew was led to know our Blessed Lord, through being a disciple of St. John the Baptist. He was with St. John when the great precursor gave his testimony to the Divinity of Christ: "Behold the Lamb of God"; and on hearing this testimony he followed Jesus. And when he had known the treasure which he had found, he sought his brother to make him participator in his happiness, saying to Peter: "We have found the Messias"; and he brought Peter to Jesus, and our Blessed Lord, fixing His eyes on him, recognizing in him His successor in His mighty mission, said to him: "Thou art Simon, the son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas." Thus, at the very first moment of his acquaintance of Jesus, he receives from our Blessed Lord the name which signifies his future office in the Church. And during the whole course of His blessed mission Jesus manifested by many ways His desire that Peter should be, and should be regarded, as Prince of the Apostles. On marked occasions when some special selection of Apostles was to

be made, Peter was always sure to be shosen. He was at Thabor during our Lord's Transfiguration, and it was he who spoke in the name of the others : " Lord, it is good for us to be here : if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias." Again, he was at Gethsemani, with two other disciples, when Jesus was commencing His Passion, and he manifested his zeal on that occasion by striking off the ear of the servant of the High Priest. He always acts as interpreter for the other Apostles ; for example, in the profession of Faith, which is found in the Gospel : " Whom do men say that the Son of Man is ? " But they said : "Some, John the Baptist, and other some, Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets." All the Apostles answered, when Christ asked them the opinion of the world about Himself. But when He asks them : Whom do you say I am ? Peter alone answers for the others, and in the name of the others : " Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God " ; and then Jesus blessed him : " Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee ; but My Father who is in Heaven." And then He made that promise and prophecy in which is contained the germ of the might and immutability of the Catholic Church : " I say unto thee : that thou art Peter : and upon this Rock I will build My Church ; and the gate of hell shall not prevail against it, and I will give to thee keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, shall be bound in Heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in Heaven." And, again, when paying the tribute-money, He bade Peter pay it, " for Me and for thee." " But that we may not scandalize them, go to the sea, and cast in a hook ; and that fish, which shall first come up, take ; and when thou hast opened its mouth, thou shalt find a stater : take that and give it to them, for Me and

for thee." And at that most solemn hour in the life of Christ, during His Last Supper, our Blessed Lord turns from the other disciples to Peter, and prophetically announces to him that his faith shall not fail : " Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for *thee*, that *thy* faith may not fail : and thou being once converted, confirm thy brethren." Nor did our Blessed Lord repent of these promises on account of Peter's sad denial, for we find that immediately after His Resurrection He renewed more emphatically than ever His promises to Peter : " and when they had dined, Jesus said to Simon Peter : Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these ? He saith to Him : Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith to him : Feed my lambs. He saith to him again: Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me ? He saith to Him : Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith to him : Feed my lambs. He saith to him the third time : Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me ? Peter was grieved, because He said the third time to him : Lovest thou Me ; and he said to Him : Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee ; He said to him : Feed my sheep." Thus, a headship, not only of honour, but of jurisdiction, was given to Peter, the privilege and the power of feeding the sheep as well as the lambs, the pastors as well as the people, and the power and the privilege of confirming the faith of his brethren. Thus we find him exercising after the Ascension of our Divine Lord. It was Peter who presided over the College of Apostles at the election of Matthias; it was Peter who addressed the assembled multitude on the day of Pentecost ; it was Peter who made that illustrious defence of the Name and the Divinity of Jesus, to the princes and priests of the people ; it was he who pronounced the awful judgment on Ananias and Sapphira ; it was he who confirmed the con-

verted Samaritans ; it was he who received the first Gentile converts into the Church, Cornelius and his family ; it was he who presided over the first Council of Jerusalem, and uttered the first infallible dogmatic decree. Here his name ceases to be mentioned in the inspired History of the Early Church. We know from ecclesiastical history, however, that St. Peter first chose Antioch for his See. Having governed that Church for seven years, he came to Rome, during the reign of the Emperor Claudian, and at Rome, in the twenty-fifth year of his pontificate there, and in the thirty-fourth year of his presidency over the Universal Church, he suffered martyrdom, having been crucified with his head hung down, through humility and contrition for his own great sin.

The first place in Scripture where we meet St. Paul is at the martyrdom of St. Stephen; "and they (that is, the murderers of Stephen) laid down their garments at the feet of a young man, whose name was Saul. And Saul was consenting to his death." He was a Jew, born in Tarsus, a Pharisee reared in the strictest tenets of Judaism, under Gamaliel. He was a fierce persecutor of the Christians, and it was on one of his journeys, undertaken for that purpose to Damascus, that he was converted by an apparition of our Blessed Lord, who blinded him with a light from Heaven, and then spoke to him: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" And Saul answered: "Who art Thou, Lord?" and He said: "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the goad." He went into the city to Ananias, a servant of God, there he was baptised, and he went from thence to the Apostles at Jerusalem. His conversion was as instantaneous as it was perfect. God wrought in him in an instant what sometimes it takes years to effect. He was changed at once from a fierce fanatic, breathing vengeance and slaughter against the saints of God, into a gentle disciple,

whose only zeal was for the Divine Master who had shown him such a wonderful mercy. And his conversion was perfect. There are few whose faith has been put to such terrible trials, but his faith was never shaken, his love of God was never diminished, and had not his love been anticipated by martyrdom, he would have died out of pure desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ. He appears to us principally in the character of Apostle to the Gentiles; and in trying to win them over to the faith of Christ, his charity was unbounded, his zeal unflagging. No obstacles could hinder him, no dangers terrify him, no persecutions change his unalterable determination to carry to the nations the Name of his Divine Master. He himself recounts his perils and trials with evident satisfaction, happy in the thought that he was accounted worthy to suffer for the Name of Christ. "Of the Jews, five times did I receive forty stripes, save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once I was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I was in the depths of the sea. In journeying often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils from my own nation, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils from false brethren. In labour and painfulness, in much watchings, in hunger and in thirst, in fasting often, in cold and nakedness. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is scandalized and I am not on fire?"

The histories of these two glorious Apostles are replete with suggestions which are well worthy of being weighed by every one who aspires to lead a Christian life. If I were asked, however, what was the mainspring of all their actions—the one guiding principle of their lives, I should answer at once that it was a great love for their Divine Master; and if I were asked further what lesson I learn from the passionate affection of the Apostles, I should answer, that this affection

of the Apostles for their Divine Master proves that Christ must have been eminently deserving of their love. No purely human being could have taken such a hold of the human heart as Jesus did of theirs: no purely human excellences could have won the admiration and love which these Apostles entertained for their Divine Master. It cannot for a moment be disputed that the one all-absorbing thought of their livestwas to promote the interests and glory of Jesus; if they had their own wills, they would at once die and go to Him, but they cheerfully obeyed His will, to live and work and suffer for Him. Turn over the pages of St. Paul, and you will find him again and again crying out: "I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ." "Who shall separate us from the charity of Christ?" And we need only refer to that first sermon of St. Peter's on the day of Pentecost, and to thefact that his contrition for the denial of his Divine Master lasted during the whole of his life.

Again, St. Paul had never seen Jesus, and had spoken to Him but once; it is true that then he received the grace of conversion, which is beyond all price, but even that will not account for the fervour and the fidelity of his love. It only remains then for us to conclude that to know Jesus for a moment meant, under the grace of the Holy Spirit, to love Him during life. To have seen Him even once was to live in His constant presence; to have heard Him speak was to remember His words for ever. Let us throw it all into one sentence: to be gifted by God with the grace of loving Him was to persevere in that love for ever.

The Apostle of Ireland.

THERE is something distinctive about the devotion of the Irish to St. Patrick, and especially about their annual celebration of his festival. This is something more than the festival of a saint. It is the festival of a nation, which feels and knows that it is in special favour with God.—the grateful joy of those who may fairly regard themselves as the chosen people of Heaven. On other saints' days we bless God for the graces He bestowed upon them; on the feast of St. Patrick we bless God, not so much for having manifested His glory in His Saint, as for having glorified himself in His people. It is the feast of the most Catholic people upon earth—the people who have done more for God than any other Christian nation—the most spiritual people upon earth—in whose every-day life are multiplied triumphs of grace over nature, of soul over body—the people who have upheld, through unexampled sorrow and temptation, the great victory which Christ gained upon the Cross over the world and the flesh and the devil.

It is no exaggeration to say, that to those who deny the existence of God and of everything supernatural, the history of the Irish people in the past is a puzzle beyond solution, and the attitude of the Irish people at present is a standing miracle. They see a nation in the past, that clung to its faith and its traditions through seven centuries of bitterest persecution,

that steadily and steadfastly rejected every bribe to sacrifice its beliefs, and patiently endured every kind of suffering to preserve them; a nation that never murmured, never complained, but suffered in silence, like the Divine Master whom it worshipped; a nation that passed through the fire with the calmness and fortitude of the martyrs; a nation that now bears its religious freedom with the same equanimity, and promises to grow in love and loyalty to God until the sacrifice is consummated and the end is gained. All this, I say, to many who are outside the Catholic Church, is a mystery beyond explanation. And they would be inclined to doubt the truth of history, if the present character of the Irish nation did not so well accord with history, and bear out the facts which it narrates. For with all their faults, the character of the Irish people at the present day is something unique, something exceptional. For the Irish people move and live in a supernatural world. Despoiled of all natural worldly gifts, they live by faith and by faith alone. Poor in all the gifts of fortune, they esteem themselves surpassingly rich in all those spiritual gifts which Christians prize. It can be said of us with truth, that no nation has its God so near to it as our God is to us. For our whole strength is from God, our whole happiness is from Him. In our sorrows we go to Him for comfort, in our joys we go to Him in thanksgiving; those false, fictitious pleasures upon which the people of other nations starve their souls, are absolutely unknown to us; we are a chosen nation, a kingly people; and the island which we inhabit is well called "holy," for every sod of earth you turn in it, is the relic of a saint. All this, to unbelievers, is a wonder of wonders—a people walking in an unseen world—holding converse with unseen beings—seeing by faith more clearly than natural things are known by reason—despising the things of earth in comparison with the things of

Heaven, and glorying, like St. Paul, in the Cross of Christ, which has been laid heavily upon them. This is a tangible proof to unbelievers that Christianity is not dead in the world, that at least in the hearts and minds of one people it survives and bears great fruit. For the sanctity of the Irish people is commensurate with the faith of the Irish people, and men do not know which to admire most, their unsullied virtue, or their unswerving faith. Now, to what are we to attribute this ? I do not mean to inquire why this was the design of God, but I wish to trace out the means by which the Almighty worked out His purpose. We find that of themselves the Irish people were pre-disposed to Christianity ; and that Almighty God chose for his Apostle the man who, above all others, was qualified to teach the faith and practices of Christianity. For the Irish race was then, as it is now, a race of strong passions and ardent affections ; and wherever nature is strong and uncorrupted, it naturally seeks for something higher than itself to interpret itself. Its morals were pure, and, therefore, it easily embraced the morality of Christianity. It was a strong, imaginative race ; it sought for a religion higher than nature could discover, and, therefore, when Christianity was preached, its wonderful mysteries captivated the people. They were a people, generous, ardent, self-sacrificing, and, therefore, they eagerly embraced a religion which constantly teaches self-sacrifice, self-denial, and whose central dogma was that God, in human form, had sacrificed Himself for His people. The Irish people had strong affection and reverence for their poor, and they saw that Christianity taught that the poor were its Founder's Divine legacy, and that kindness to them was to be the measure of our fitness for Heaven.

And God, looking upon this people with eyes of love, chose as their Apostle from His whole Church, a man

according to His own heart. By nature, by grace, by his training, under the hands of Providence, St. Patrick was fitted for the great work of the apostolate to which he was called. Whatever disputes may rage about his nationality, there cannot be the slightest doubt that he was a man of singular sanctity, and endowed with every natural and supernatural gift that could qualify him for his mission. As a child, he was remarkable for his piety and holiness; and God tried him in his youth as He tries all His saints, by bitter adversity; and when he was tried and not found wanting, God placed him under the care of three of the greatest saints of the Church, St. Martin of Tours, St. Germanus, and St. Vincent of Lerins. From St. Martin, his uncle, he drew that zeal for the salvation of souls for which he was so remarkable—from St. Germanus, he learned the great science of the saints and became thoroughly acquainted with the magnificent theology of the Catholic Church—and from St. Vincent, he learned that deep love for God, which influenced all his actions during life, was the source of his zeal, and the reason of his success. Looking back all these years to those wild and barbarous times, there is something very touching in the sight of that young saint, exiled from home, a slave, engaged in the most servile occupation, in a strange land, and amongst a wild people, and finding his only consolation in worshipping the great unseen Father who was so tenderly watching over him, and preparing him for the most glorious mission that apostle ever received. The young swine-herd, in the bleak mountains of Donegal, with no companions but the beasts he tended, knelt one hundred times by day and one hundred times by night, to worship God. All his strength came from prayer, and from union with the cross of his Divine Master.

He bore that captivity for six long years, his great heart all the time yearning towards the strong, passionate people that lived around him, who, in their own rude way, were worshipping the unseen God in groves of oak, and offering sacrifices of human beings towards the creations of their own imaginations. St. Patrick could not approach them, he could not speak to them ; he wept and prayed for them ; but God's time had not come, and the Saint, with great sorrow in his heart, bade farewell to the Irish shores and left the people whom he loved in darkness and the shadow of death. But see how wonderfully God works ! The Saint thought that he was abandoning his people for ever. The Eternal Father was only removing him for a moment to unite them again on firmer and more lasting bonds of spiritual affection. He removed St. Patrick to prepare him by study and prayer—and by the Sacrament of Holy Orders and by the blessing of the Supreme Pontiff for his exalted mission.

And when the time was come, in sleep, in a vision, he received from God his mission. And he rose up and obeyed, and on the same shores that he had sanctified by his prayers before, he landed again—no longer a slave, but a prince and prelate of God's Church—no longer clad in sheep-skin, but in the sacred vestments of a Bishop—no longer bearing a shepherd's staff, but the crozier, the emblem of pastoral love and fatherly care and affection—no longer alone, but surrounded by priests and monks and levites—the precursor of that glorious Irish hierarchy that has evangelised the world, and carried to all nations the name and doctrine of Jesus Christ. And then occurred that wonderful and sudden resurrection of a whole people from darkness to light, from the black and terrible mysteries of druidism to the Christian religion, with its doctrines of love and mercy and pity. It was not that St. Patrick made a convert here and a convert there, but the

whole nation, the nation that had cried to him in his dreams rose up at his bidding, and casting aside the traditions of two thousand years, embraced the doctrines that St. Patrick preached to them, because the very instincts of the people told them that these doctrines were true. And it was not the poor alone that St. Patrick converted ; but the rich, the educated, the powerful, the Druid priest, and the bard that was omnipotent—all, as if they had been expecting for years the summons of Christ's Apostle, cast aside their power and their wealth, and made themselves disciples of Patrick and slaves of Christ. The old fierceness of the people vanished before the mild teachings of Christianity The old men, warriors and clansmen, went down into their graves without a wish for revenge ; and the young—the pure, young Irish, fascinated by the glories of Christianity, came in thousands to the feet of Patrick, and gave themselves body and soul to the service of Jesus Christ, their Master.

Convents and monasteries covered the land, and schools sprang up by their sides, and the schools developed into Colleges, and the Colleges grew into Universities, and when learning was banished from Europe, it found a home in the West, and Europe, in its despair, looked to Ireland, as to a nation of Apostles, who were to evangelise and educate it.

Meanwhile, the grand old Saint had gone to his reward. His life was laborious, but quiet, travelling from end to end of the island, preaching, catechising, healing the sick, consecrating bishops, and ordaining priests, receiving the vows of countless Irish virgins and clothing them with the consecrated veils, symbols of that immaculate purity which at all times has characterised the daughters of St. Bridget. And when the time of his reward had come, he received the Body of Christ from the hands of one of his Bishops, and passed into Heaven, bearing as his offering to God, and as the

result of his life's labour, a whole nation, a nation of Saints and Doctors, whose fidelity to God is as certain as that of the angels, who have been confirmed by God in their glory.

An old chronicle sums up his virtues and sanctity in this way: "A just man, indeed, was this man; with purity of nature, like the patriarchs; a true pilgrim, like Abraham; gentle and forgiving of heart, like Moses; a praiseworthy psalmist, like David; an emulator of wisdom, like Solomon; a chosen vessel for proclaiming truth, like the apostle Paul; a man full of grace and the knowledge of the Holy Ghost, like the beloved John; a fair flower garden to children of grace; a flaming fire; a lion in strength and power; a dove in gentleness and humility; a serpent in Wisdom to do good; gentle, humble, merciful, towards Sons of Life; dark, ungentle, towards Sons of Death; a servant of labour and service for Christ; a king in dignity and might, for binding and loosening, for liberating and convicting, for killing and giving life." Such was the Apostle of Ireland, the glorious St. Patrick.

Mary, the Mother of God.

"His home and His hiding-place both were in thee:
He was won by thy shining, sweet Star of the sea!"
—F. W. Faber.

I.

IT is quite a surprise, almost indeed a scandal to men, the way in which God performs some of His most marvellous works. With a divine scorn of pride and ostentation and human formality, His omnipotence evokes creations from nothing, and fashions existing things with a word; very often without even the medium of a word, but only with a wish. Simplicity is the soul of God's creation. And as God is simple in the way He chooses to work, so, too, is He simple in the instruments He employs. It is true that He never selects for His designs but what has been already well adapted for them by His wonder-working graces; but men cannot see the mighty processes of justification and sanctification wherewith He fits the humblest soul for the highest missions; and so when God, passing by the proud and mighty ones of the world, stoops into the very lowest depths, and studies, as it seems, to select only what is humble and obscure, the world is offended, and because it cannot see with God's eyes, it refuses to submit to God's dispensation.

In nothing is this more true than of the way in which God worked out the greatest mystery of His creation—the mystery of His own Divine Son, figure of His substance and splenour of

His glory, true God of true God, Light of Light, hidden, concealed, annihilated, we might almost say, in the form of one of His own creatures. A quiet chamber in the humblest house of the humblest village of a conquered nation, was the scene of the Incarnation of the Son of God; and the humblest maiden in that humblest village was, almost before she knew it, the Mother of the Most High. In the silence of noon-day, Mary is kneeling at her orisons, unconscious of her own existence, thinking only of God. A figure of light stands beside her; speaks to her in language she has never heard before, language to her quite unintelligible, sounding to her deep humility like words of mockery, for she is self-annihilated and swallowed up in the great abyss of her love for God. "Hail, full of grace," sounds startling to a mind just filled with the idea of how poor and weak and lowly she was before God! "The Lord is with thee." She had been thinking of Him as of one very far away, as of one, perhaps, that had never since the moment of her birth cast a thought or a look upon her, and she was quite content to worship and to love Him, unseen of Him and unnoticed. "Blessed art thou amongst women" She had been thinking who was the happy maiden that was selected by the Most High to be the Mother of His Son; thinking how she would honour her, but not envy her, never dreaming that from eternity she had been selected by the Most Holy Trinity for the high honour, and that to fit her for the high position the Spirit of God had been with her from the first instant of her conception, had been personally united to her, had kept at a distance from her the powers of sin and darkness, had averted from her everything that could mar the exquisite beauty of her soul, had been daily infusing new graces, had been daily evolving from her soul fresh loveliness, had been daily flinging around her heavenly radiances, whilst all the time, He let her rest in the deep abysses of humility,

more than saint or angel, yet all unconscious of her sanctity. "Blessed amongst women." Blessed amongst all God's creatures he might well have said, for the purity of that young virgin outrivalled the purity of Heaven's brightest angel, and compared with her love for God the love of the Seraphim was cold. "Who having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought within herself what manner of salutation this might be." And the angel went on to say how God had determined to work out His mighty design. She might have understood his words, or she might not have understood them. But she had no will of her own; her will was the will of God, and so she spoke her Fiat. "Be it done unto me according to thy word." And the mightiest mystery of God's great love, the mystery that was a scandal to Lucifer and his fellows, the mystery whose depths eternity will not reveal, the mystery that will hold us speechless for ever before the throne of God, was accomplished. The figure of light disappeared, the little chamber assumed its wonted appearance; there remained only the child-mother, bathed in tears, but the God of the universe was in her bosom.

To comprehend the greatness of the dignity to which Mary was thus raised, it would be necessary to measure the greatness of God Himself. It was the closest union that could subsist between the uncreated and a creature, and the very fact of this union, independently of the preparation that must have been made for it, raises Mary above all other creatures, to a level infinitely inferior to God, but unapproachable to men and angels. For if to be close to God is to partake of His sanctity, what must not the holiness of Mary be, who was united to God in the closest bonds of union, who gave Him that body, that was to be torn and mangled for the sins of the world, who held Him in her arms and nursed him in His infancy, who followed Him step by step in the weary journey of His life,

who rejoiced in His joys, and sympathised with a Mother's sympathy in His sufferings, who walked in His blood-stained footsteps up the great steep hill of Calvary, who stood fainting and weak in her mighty sorrow under the Cross, when the light had died out of Creation and she was stared at by the blackness of despair, who held the dead body of Jesus in her arms, and buried all her hope with Him in the sepulchre, who caught the first glance of His beatified countenance when He arose from the tomb, and the last accents of His blessing when He ascended into Heaven, who died out of the very excess of her desire to be reunited with her Son in Heaven, who for all eternity can never lose the privilege of Divine Maternity, whose union with God shall never cease, but only be strengthened and cemented by the great eternal years, to whom—following the example of her Divine Son—the eyes of Catholics shall for ever turn with reverent admiration, with heartfelt pride, that God should have so honoured our nature, and with a child-like confidence that if Jesus be our brother, we indeed have filial claims on Mary!

Though it is possible for God to form a creature more perfect than Mary, for with all her great privileges she was still but a creature and finite, and the power of God is infinite—still it would be in a certain sense impossible for God to raise her to a higher dignity. The attributes of God are infinite; they are therefore incommunicable. A creature is absolutely incapable of possessing them. Be that creature ever so high, and holy and exalted, it must for ever remain a creature, and therefore it must be for ever infinitely inferior to God. Therefore it is that between God and the Blessed Virgin there is an infinity that can never be spanned. Her holiness and wisdom and purity, compared with the holiness and wisdom and purity of God, are no more than a day compared to eternity, or a sand in the hour-glass to the mighty worlds of this universe.

But whilst freely admitting this, we also teach that we cannot by any possibility conceive how God can exalt a creature more than He exalted Mary, by making her His Mother. She occupies a sphere peculiarly her own. Her majesty and dignity do not even approach the majesty and dignity of God; but neither are they approached or approachable by any other creature. Therefore it is that the saints of the Church have not hesitated to declare that the dignity of Mary is infinite in its kind. St. Bernard says "that the state to which God exalted Mary in making her His Mother was the highest state which could be conferred on a pure creature; so that He could not have exalted her more." And St. Albert the Great says, "that in bestowing on Mary the Maternity of God, God gave her the highest gift of which a pure creature is capable." Of course, in saying this the saints do not pretend to limit the infinite power of God, an idea abhorrent to every Catholic mind; they only declare the incapacity of creatures to receive a greater privilege than this of Mary's Divine Maternity. Such is Catholic truth, holding as it always does the golden mean between the heresies. With all the Church's devotion to Mary, she dare not, cannot trench upon the glory of God; neither will she, though heresy scream itself hoarse, abate by even one degree the dignity of that Virgin whom it is our pride to honour.

It would sound a strange and a startling doctrine, perhaps, to Protestant ears, that in very truth our reverence and love for the Blessed Virgin Mary arises simply from the reverence and love we have for God Himself. Yet if we analyse our devotion to Mary, its origin and its nature we shall find that this is the case. The Catholic idea of God is not the idea of One who lives somewhere away in space, vague and shadowy, who takes little or no interest in His creatures, to whom, therefore, no corresponding interest is due from His creatures; but it is the

idea of One "in whom we live and move and are," who mingles with us in our daily life, who is deeply interested in our welfare; for whom therefore we entertain a deep and personal love, blended with holy awe and filial reverence. This being so, nothing that has the slightest connection with God can be to us uninteresting. Heaven is only Heaven to us, because the smile of God is there. Hell is only hell because the frown of God for ever rests upon it, and its fire has been enkindled by His anger. Wherever the presence of God is, we view that place as consecrated ground; whatever the hand of God has touched is to us for evermore holy. Herein is found a key for those Catholic doctrines that are so enigmatical to Protestants, reverence for the relics of God's holy ones, reverence for pictures of Christ and His saints, reverence for the saints themselves. It is all our reverence for God, reflected upon these His creatures, and reflected from these His creatures back again upon God. Therefore it is that we do not scruple to honour the saints; therefore it is that we honour the Mother whom God Himself so honoured. If Mary had not been chosen to be Mother of God, she might have grown up like any other Jewish maiden, and Catholics would honour her as they honour other holy women. But she is the Mother of God, and therefore we pay her an honour proportionate to her dignity. We cannot make any difference between Mary and the Mother of God. We cannot regard the Blessed Virgin, abstracting altogether from this her highest prerogative. It is her crown, her glory; she cannot lose it, and certainly Catholics will never try to rob her of it. It is true that after 1900 years' experience, after repeated proofs of Mary's more than maternal sympathy for us, knowing as we do the care she takes of her clients, and the innumerable graces she obtains for them by her intercession with her Son, it is quite true that our love for Mary has in it something personal, that we are fond of

regarding her as our Mother, as well as the Mother of God; but even this filial reverence on our part is traceable to her privilege of Divine Maternity, for it is by reason of that same privilege that she can plead for us so powerfully and efficaciously with her Son. Like Esther, Mary has been raised to a very high dignity. Like Esther, she has used all her influence in her high position on behalf of her people. God forbid that her people should ever forget her.

Therefore it is that the Church of God has always regarded with reverence and affection this realisation of an ideal that the omniscience of God alone could conceive, and the omnipotence of God alone could create. Therefore it is that devotion to Jesus Christ is invariably followed by devotion to His Immaculate Mother. Therefore it is that the saints of God have not hesitated to say that the measure of our devotion to the Blessed Virgin is also the measure of our sanctity. We cannot separate the Son from the Mother. And I would give very little, indeed, for the Christianity of the man, who, looking upon a picture of the Madonna and Child, could realise to himself the fact that the Infant is God, and yet gaze with cold indifference on the face of the Mother who holds Him. It is a lamentable, to us a very painful fact, that the only known type of men professing to be Christians that can be found to do so is the English-speaking Protestant of our own time. Proud and haughty men, even nations whose prosperity made the sweet yoke of Christ feel galling, have now and again fallen away from that Church which is the only guide of men to Heaven; but never have they forgotten to take with them in their exile, the memory of the Infant God and His Immaculate Mother. There is not a house in Russia to-day that has not its picture of the Immaculate Mother. Even the Bedouin of the Arabian Deserts will save your life and restore your purse if you only ask them in

the name of Miriam. It was only a few years ago that we read in Mr. Kinglake's history of the Crimean war, that the Russian soldiers struck down in the battles of Alma and Balaklava begged quarter for the sake of Mary, thinking, as Mr. Kinglake observes, that however Christian sects may differ from one another, the name of Mary at least would be dear to all. Even Rationalists freely admit the beauty of her who is the peculiar creation of Christianity, and her powerful influence to restrain men from evil, and to help them in the path of perfection. "The world," says Mr. Lecky, "is governed by its ideals; and seldom or never has there been one which has exercised a more profound and, on the whole, a more salutary influence than the conception of the Virgin. All that was best in Europe clustered around it, and it is the origin of many of the purest elements of our civilisation."

It was reserved for the chivalry of Protestantism to rob Christianity of this, its highest, purest ideal; it was reserved for cold, prosaic Protestantism, that tries to measure God by syllogisms, ignorant that its every syllogism is a sophism, to take from the world her that is the world's life and sweetness and hope. And in the Protestantism of the present day we trace the fulfilment of this great truth that they who begin by declining to honour the Mother are sure to end by blaspheming the Son.

The undying instinct of Christianity to honour the Mother of Christ has been smothered remorselessly for 300 years. To-day it is beginning to assert itself. From the walls of Protestant churches that have stared blankly on the people for three centuries, the mild face of the Madonna is again beaming. It has lost nothing of its kindness during its long banishment. In this fact is visible a gleam of hope for future. Indeed, if our poor Ritualists would only give up burlesquing the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and making a mockery of the

Sacraments, I would have hopes that their devotion to our Lady, cold and weak though it be, would bring them back eventually to the bosom of the Church. For this is a truth which I hold with all the certainty of faith, that never yet did the Mother of God leave a single petition, however feeble unanswered, or a single favour unrequited.

II.

It is an easy transition to turn from the thought of Mary the Mother to the thought of the Mother's sorrows. The Catholic Church has always attached a great deal of importance to the consideration of the Dolours of our Blessed Lady, and has instituted a feast in their honour. Two ideas seem to be ever present to the mind of the Church—the consciousness of the truth of her Divine Mission, and of the truth that that mission is one of perpetual suffering which will be ended in triumph. With the Church to exist is to suffer, to enjoy but few moments of peace, to be always borne down by the force of persecution. This is her natural condition; she recognises it as her special vocation. No Catholic ever wonders at the persecution of the Church, in the same way as no Catholic ever allows in his mind a shadow of doubt that there is a Divine mind always thinking for the Church, a Divine eye watching it, and a Divine hand supporting it. Our faith grows with her troubles; if ever it lessens, it is when these troubles are lessened. The era of persecution is the era of Faith.

In the days of the Emperors we recognise the heroic age of Christianity, because their persecutions showed the heroic valour of individual saints. The spirit of the Church is the same to-day as it was then; it is not exhibited, however, in the sharp, decisive sacrifices of saints, but in the quite, passive suffering of the whole body.

Now, this vocation of sacrifice has created in the Church a sympathy with those whom God has honoured with similar vocations. The Church was not slow to perceive that she was not specially honoured by being specially chastised. Nor was she set apart to be one everlasting holocaust—the only victim of love or of justice that the world has seen. Even at her birth she had wisdom enough to see that it was not for her the law of suffering had been made. It existed before she existed, and found victims before she had discovered in herself the capabilities of suffering. Furthermore, these victims were the chosen ones of all the earth, the best-beloved of the Heavens, whence these decrees of suffering were issued; and at once she set herself the task of studying the examples of these martyrs who had gone before her, of deriving from these examples the wisdom and the strength that were to support her in her career of suffering; of imitating them in their patience, their confidence, their wisdom in praying and leaning in their hours of weakness upon God; and as she had to teach as well as to suffer, she determined that these examples should be ever kept before the minds of her children, that as they had the same vocation of suffering as she, they might have the same support and the same consolation. This is the reason why the Passion of our Divine Lord is the great devotion of the Church; and this is the reason why next after her glorious title, "Mother of God," there is none under which the Church is so anxious to honour Mary as under the title "Mother of Sorrows." And, indeed, if we except Him, who first of all consecrated suffering, where shall we look for a sublime example of noble patience under suffering, of love sustained in suffering, of constancy unwavering in suffering, of hope unfailing in suffering, if not in Mary? She is the one perfect example in the world of that self-sacrifice in spirit and in act, which is the duty of every Christian. She knew it to be the

duty of her life from the first moment that God revealed to her the part she was to play between God and men; and she accepted the duty because it was God's will. But this was not all. It is easy to forecast the future—to see what we shall do. It is easy to make promises of sacrifice; it is very hard to make the sacrifices themselves. But when the moments of sacrifice came to Mary, there was no repentance of rashly-made promises —the will and the pain were found consecrated to God beyond the possibility of being recalled by His creature. And thus every moment of her life she offered to God the spotless sacrifice of her will and her sufferings, unqualified by a single condition, without a murmur of dissent from the adorable will of her Creator. When the angel brought her from Heaven the message of her surpassing exaltation, her answer to the Divine will was: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord"; and when Simeon told her that the sword should pierce her, her reply was the same. In exaltation and humiliation, in glory and in shame, in joy and in sorrow, she knew but one prayer—that the will of God be done. God Himself must have inspired that prayer; and then she was made the teacher of that prayer to Jesus, and Jesus taught that prayer to the world when His disciples asked Him how to pray, and He consecrated that prayer for ever in that moment of supreme agony when He received that intimation from Heaven that His own Father would abandon Him on the Cross. "Not My will, but Thine be done." These were the words of consecration, with which Jesus made the generous sacrifice of Himself to His Father. And where did He learn them? From her to whom He had taught them. Before He was yet her child, He inspired her with that prayer from Heaven; when she became His Mother, she used her Mother's privilege and taught the prayer to her Child; and evening after evening that prayer ascended to Heaven from the little home in Nazareth, from

the lips of the Mother who sacrificed her Child, from the lips of the Child who sacrificed Himself. Mary, sacrificing Jesus, and in Jesus her own soul, for she cared for nothing in the world but Him; and Jesus, immolating Himself and His Mother. What wonder that it should become the model prayer of the Christian! Sanctified by the lips of Son and Mother, sanctified by the precious Victims which it immolated, sanctified by the fulness of will with which it was made, it embodies the whole spirit of Christianity. Every lesson of Christianity is summed up in that one word "Sacrifice," and Christian perfection is attained, when, in every moment of our lives, in every change and every vicissitude, under the frown, as well as under the smile of Heaven, we can say with the truthfulness of Mary: "Thy will be done." Nor can it be said for a moment that the sorrows of our Blessed Lady were easy to be borne, because the sufferings of her Son were only part of a great design of love which God was slowly working out and developing. It is true she knew all this, knew that her Son was a willing Victim, that He embraced His Cross with eagerness and would have suffered, if it were possible, worse torments than those of the Cross, to effect a reconciliation between His Father and men. She foresaw the Resurrection succeeding to Calvary, and she knew that for the three sharp hours of suffering on Calvary there would be centuries of thanksgiving from men upon earth, and an eternity of glory in Heaven. But all these previsions, all these anticipations, did not lessen the sorrow in the Mother's heart; indeed, she was made for acute suffering, and though the anticipations of Calvary did cloud her whole life, and make even the period of Jesus' childhood a season of bitterness and grief, the happiness that was to come never was allowed to allay that bitterness and grief, or cast complete brightness on her soul and troubled life. The one thought shut out all things else—the terrible Passion that was to be

closed on Calvary, and overwhelmed by the thought of that awful trial, she was incapable of eliciting comfort even from the triumphs of her Son. But with holy meekness she rested in her sorrow and resigned her soul to God, to be the instrument of His will. Indeed, if ever it were possible that Mary in her dolours could catch a gleam of hope and consolation from the future, surely it would be when all her suspense was over, and her worst anticipations were realized in the Death of her Son. Her thirty years' martyrdom was endured in alternating between hope and fear, it was the anguish of uncertainty; but it was all over; a few hours would pass and the grave would give up her Son, and then there would be a series of glorious visions, terminating in His complete triumph over the world and hell. Surely, if Mary could have argued thus, she would have done so. If ever she could have forgotten the present in the future, it would be then, when the dark present was visibly vanishing and the glorious future visibly approaching. But we do not need the visions of contemplatives to know that Mary had no such consolation. Like all the other dolours of her life, her sorrow at the foot of the Cross was like in kind, but different in intensity, from that of Jesus; and as on the Cross there was no consolation, human or divine, for the Son, neither was there consolation for the Mother. "The Heart of Jesus," says a holy writer, "had divine support, but divine consolation was carefully kept apart. The interior of that Heart was clearly disclosed to the Mother's inward eyes, and her heart participated in His sufferings. She, too, needed a miracle to prolong her life, and the miracle was performed. But with the same peculiarity, from her also all consolation was kept away." It is not at all difficult to understand this. It was only the highest sense of duty that brought the Mother to the foot of the Cross. It was scarcely even her natural affection. She knew that she could be of little use to Him,

that the very designs of Heaven had robbed the dying Son even of His Mother's love, that His chalice had to be drunk without a drop to mitigate its bitterness, and if Mary would be present at all at the Crucifixion, it would be to add a pang to the sufferings of the Divine Martyr, not to lessen or relieve them. And, therefore, when the darkness closed around the Cross, and the great sacrifice was commenced, Mary crept through the darkness to the foot of the Cross, with the same feelings with which Jesus an hour before mounted the Hill of Calvary, with the intention of offering to the Father, side by side with the Son, the Sacrifice of her own being, her soul, her heart and will. It was the last crowning, consummating act in that long life of Sacrifice; it was the burning, the destroying of the Victims. There was the momentary thought of her habitual humility that hers was an unworthy sacrifice, but she put it aside and trusted in the magnanimity of her Father that He would take it for what it was worth, and pay it back in graces to the world. And He, the Father, did accept it; took from her every hope, every comfort, every blessed memory of the past and every blessed vision of the future; called her Mary, sea of bitterness, and then left her transfixed, side by side with the Son on Calvary, and withdrew back into Heaven, leaving His Power to support them, without His Mercy to console them. Son and Mother! Mother and Son! the noonday Sacrifice. Here were the Victims. And who was the High Priest? God's justice exercised through the Jews, and exercised by the Victims one upon the other. What were the instruments of execution? The Cross of Jesus and the Sword of Prophecy that had pierced the soul of the Mother. What was the length of the Sacrifice? Three hours, into which were compressed Heaven only knows how much agony. Fiery tortures in the Heart and Mind of Jesus, and unspeakable agony in the heart and mind of Mary. There were a few gentle

bleatings from the dying Lamb of God, and His last breath was her worst torture. If ever the spirit of Jesus was communicated to His creatures, it was to Mary; if ever His sublime patience was reflected in the soul of His creature, it was in the soul of Mary; and we thank Him for ever, for that He in His goodness has left us such an exalted type of resignation as His own "Mother of Sorrows."

We need such a model, such an example of patience, for our own lives. There is no Christian truth so clearly revealed as this, that the spirit of every Christian must be a spirit of sacrifice. There is not a law for the head and a milder law for the members, but one universal Heavenly decree, directed to all, without exception, who call themselves by the name of Christ. "If any man would be My disciple," said Christ, "let him deny himself take up his Cross, and follow Me." He means follow Him to Calvary, and enter by a similar death of sacrifice into Heaven. And again He says: "He that will lose his life shall save it"; meaning that our salvation is to be secured by the generous sacrifice of our whole beings, even our very lives to God.

Now, some sacrifices are sent us direct from the hands of God, and we must accept them; and some must be made by ourselves, with the help of Divine grace. "Whom God loveth, He chastiseth"; and "they that are faithful must needs be tried." This is the key to that mystery which men call evil. Now, it seems to me to be a special favour of Heaven that God should choose our sacrifices for us. We have not the trouble of deliberating and choosing, nor the fear that after all our sacrifice might not prove acceptable. God has made the selection for us; it only remains for us to accept His choice, and we know we are doing His will. In sickness, therefore, of any kind, in poverty, shame, and humiliation; in loss of friends, in loss of position, in loss of wealth, in all those ills which

humanity so much fears, the Christian recognises gifts from the hands of his Father in Heaven, and seeks resignation in the Cross of his Divine Master, and in the example of the Mother of Sorrows. If the innocent suffer, why may not the guilty; if they who had every right to all the goods of this earth, so freely sacrificed them, shall I seek after them and repine at losing them, I who have so often by sin abandoned my rights to them? Where shall we seek for faithful subjects of the King who became despised and the most abject of men? Where shall we look for loyal subjects of the Queen, for whose sorrows the prophets looked in vain for a comparison? Not in the delicate pampered Christian who shrinks from suffering, and lives in hope that God will overlook him, but in the true devoted disciple who hastens to make himself like to his Divine Master, and prays Heaven to effect that blessed transformation in him without delay. That is the true disciple, the upholder in practice of those sublime maxims which most Christians are content with professing, without putting into practice. Resignation is a virtue which we admire in others, and which seems easy until the day of trial comes. Mary was perfect in the resignation she displayed beneath the cross, and expects that we should endeavour to imitate her.

But if Heaven has not chosen to send us sufferings, there is always in ourselves materials enough for a sacrifice. There is a victim ever present within us; we need not look outside ourselves for something to sacrifice to God. Who is there that can say that he is entirely dedicated to God? Who is there that can say that his whole heart belongs to God? In some of the most refined souls of the saints, the all-pure God detected some dross of earthly affection and self-seeking. It was only when they sacrificed that little that God adopted them for His own. And in our souls, too, is there not some dross of earthly affection and self-seeking? Is there anything else in

them but love of the world and love of self? Here, then, are materials for a sacrifice.

It was no consolation to Mary that the Resurrection succeeded so close upon Calvary. But it may be a source of consolation to us. God does not hesitate about His rewards. There is no suspense in Heaven. He demands a full and perfect sacrifice, but He holds in His hands a full and immediate reward. There is not a moment's interval between the last moment of sacrifice and the full enjoyment of God.

III.

It is one of the many things in God's dealings with us, that seem so very mysterious, that He should have made suffering a condition of sanctity, and that our novitiate on earth in preparation for our profession in Heaven should be sadly embittered either by chastisements which He sends immediately from Himself, or by sorrows we ourselves induce, or by troubles which men as instruments in the hands of His Providence inflict upon us. It is a strange truth, not the less true because it is strange, that to wish to be the friend or child of God is to wish to suffer. We cannot get near Him without being afflicted, and the nearer we approach the more intense do our sufferings become. God cannot lay His hand upon us without pressing very heavily, and when we turn our faces away from the world, and look up to Him, He will very soon wet them with our tears. It is His way of dealing with His saints; the reasons of it are hidden away from our sight in the depths of His wisdom; we know and can trace them all to the greatness of His love; we know that His punishing us does not argue in Him want of love for us; nay, He Himself has told us that "whom He loves He chastises," and so we are quite content to take cognizance of the fact without scrutinizing

it or God's motives too closely. This, then, may be stated as a general law, that as our Divine Lord was a man of suffering, that as sorrow was the one characteristic of His life upon earth, containing and concealing every other feature; so every other creature that has ever come nigh unto Him, has been stamped into the likeness of His sorrow, and that no creature shall ever come nigh unto Him, unless it be scarred with the scars of suffering, and thus marked with the sign of the Lamb.

He came upon earth, and His coming was the signal for the death of the many thousand Holy Innocents that had never seen Him, nor known Him, but had the good fortune to be born about the same time, and thus to be ushered through short, quick suffering into an eternity of happiness, unseen by human eyes, unheard by human ears, undreamt by the human heart. Again, nearly all of His apostles died violent deaths. Peter and his brother on a cross, Paul by the sword, James under showers of stones, Bartholomew under the flaying knife. John did not die violently, but he had suffered all the tortures of martyrdom in the boiling caldron and on the island of Patmos. And if we could see the inner lives of those saints we would find that their sufferings were not partial and instantaneous, but that a great dark cloud of sorrow overhung their whole lives, and that it was only by passing through it that they emerged into the inaccessible light of Heaven.

It is not surprising then, that as our Blessed Mother was most highly favoured of God, so too she of all creatures should be most deeply afflicted by Him. That as she was always nighest unto Jesus, so she too had the largest share in His sufferings. Her whole life being bound up in His, it necessarily followed that everything that touched Him touched her also. His thoughts were her thoughts, His wish was her will, never was she dissociated from Him, and, therefore, she had more than a Mother's share in His sorrows. She was with Him

in the stable, and if His great infinite mind was awake in the form of the slumbering child, and keenly alive in all its apparent helplessness to the misery with which it was surrounded, was not the Mother's heart, too, sensitive of the sufferings of Her Infant, and was not she as a creature still more deeply humbled and confounded that on the first night of His sojourn on earth, she so exalted, so richly endowed, to whom such mighty things had been done, had no better place to lay the Creator of the universe? And from that hour, indeed long before it, until the hour which saw her re-united with her Son in Heaven, her life was one long sorrow. Every instant came to her laden with anguish and bitterness. She knew the mission upon which her Divine Son had come upon earth. It was revealed in part to her by the angel when he said that the name of the Child should be Jesus. It was revealed to her fully by Simeon when he told her that "the Child was raised for the fall and the resurrection of many in Israel, and that her own soul a sword should pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts might be revealed." Now, it was this knowledge of the sufferings of Jesus, combined with her exquisite sensitiveness to suffering, and to His sufferings most of all, that constituted all her dolours. Ignorance is often the greatest preservative of happiness; we cannot suffer from that of which we know nothing; from how many miseries does not God deliver us by shutting out His future from our view? If it were revealed to us in our own young years, that we should have to pass through all the difficulties and stern trials and many martyrdoms of manhood; if to us in the vigour of life, all the sorrows of old age were shown so as to be perfectly understood and felt, all its imbecility and helplessness and dotage, its restlessness, its querulousness, and how we should be a burden to others, and how the young would laugh at the follies of our second childhood, and our friends would say: "Oh! death would be a

relief to him," when they really mean "death would be a relief to themselves," how wretched would not our lives be. But God, pitying our weakness, makes the future dark to us, and so the sorrows of life come to us in instalments, one by one, and we easily glide over them by His assistance and go our ways cheerfully, not seeing the many others that are bearing down on us thick and fast from the great hands of His Providence. But He did not deal so with our Blessed Mother. All the sorrows of her life were concentrated into each instant of it. Every recollection was laden with sorrow. And because she was gifted by God with a terrible prevision of Calvary, every present act, and every anticipation of the future was the source of intense suffering. Calvary was for ever before her eyes, and though it is true God alone can measure the sufferings of our Divine Lord during His Passion, we know that for her own greater glory in Heaven He intensified her sufferings upon earth, by holding for ever before her the vision of the Cross, and revealing to her at the same time, the sufferings of her Divine Son in their terrible reality.

He threw around the Cross a supernatural light that showed in their dread significance the horrors of the sufferings of an Infinite Being; He gave her to understand, so far as her limited comprehension would allow, what is meant by the death of a God, revealed to her with terrible distinctness that the Divinity of her Son, so far from lessening the greatness of His sufferings, was the cause of their infinite significance and their infinite intensity, and this picture with all its horrors standing out in bold relief, He kept before her eyes during her whole life—the anticipation of Calvary for the thirty-three years of the life of Jesus, the reality of Calvary on Calvary, the memory of Calvary when Jesus had gone away and left the blank that was worse than Calvary in His Mother's heart. Calvary depicted in its minutest detail was for ever before her eyes. The

presence of her Divine Son kept it there. Every look at Him was a reminder of it. Every look at His mild, majestic face, summoned the ever-present vision of that same face, haggard, blood-stained, pale, as it was destined to be on Calvary. Every sound of His voice, speaking from the depths of His great loving Heart, was to the Mother's ears a reminder of the terrible cry of anguish which Jesus would utter when utterly crushed beneath the weight of His Father's vengeance, and unable to find even in His Divinity a support. In very truth it may be said that Mary walked all her life in the shadow of Calvary. It deepened all her many minor sorrows, it made her joys sufferings. It darkened all her life. As a Mother she mourned the cruel death of her Son, as the best beloved of God's creatures she was horror-stricken at the view of the indignities to which her Creator would be subjected, as the fellow-creature and sister of men she deplored the blindness that would not recognise the proofs of her Son's Divinity, and the obduracy that repaid the benevolence of her Son with a crime of the blackest ingratitude. And all this time with every succeeding vision her love for Jesus was increasing. The nearer they drew to Calvary, the dearer was Jesus to His Mother, the nearer the time of parting approached the more did Mary feel that she could not bear to be separated from her Son, and it was her sorrow's crown of sorrow that her habitual vision of her Son's sufferings did not dull the anguish of their reality, but increased her sensibility by increasing her love. Hence, there is no exaggeration in that assertion of the saints that Mary suffered more than all the martyrs that ever bled for Christ, for great though the sufferings of the martyrs were, they will not bear comparison with hers, inasmuch as her sufferings were proportioned to her greatness, and as the dignity of the Mother of God was greater than the united dignities of all saints and angels, so were her sorrows greater than all their

united sorrows. Again, that which is to all the martyrs of Christ the greatest consolation under their trials was to Mary the very source of all her sufferings. We know that however cruelly the martyrs were treated, whatever torments they had to endure, however human physical strength yielded under the inhuman barbarity of their tormentors, they could always afford to smile at their tormentors, for there was always with them a presence that soothed their sufferings, that tempered the heat of the fires, and made the hard rack easy, and changed all their sufferings into joy—the presence of their Divine Master, and the consciousness that it was for Him they suffered, that in their sufferings they were made somewhat like unto Him. But it was this very presence of her Divine Son that was the chief cause of Mary's sorrow. It was for Him she suffered. The sight of Him, the bare fancy of whose presence could instigate and at the same time annihilate the sufferings of the martyrs, was her most cruel torture. And then she had no assistance from Him. The saints of the Church are unanimous in declaring that Mary's sufferings were, to purely human strength unendurable. She could not have lived under them did not God assist her. St. Anselm says: "Whatever cruelty was inflicted on the martyrs was light, or rather it was nothing compared to the cruelty of Mary's passion." St. Bernardine of Sienna says that so great was the sorrow of the Blessed Virgin, that if it was subdivided and parcelled out among all creatures capable of suffering, they would perish instantly. And it was revealed to St. Bridget that if our Lord had not miraculously supported His Mother it would not have been possible for her to live through her martyrdom. But the support He gave her was devoid of consolation. He strengthened her that she might suffer the more. He endowed her with a supernatural life, and yet kept within her what would be the cause of instantaneous death, if even

for a moment He withdrew His extraordinary conserving power.

Is not Mary, therefore, rightly called the Queen of Martyrs ? How well she earned the title when she stood beneath the Cross of Jesus ! No martyrdom of the saints was more exquisite in point of torture, more protracted in the endurance, more noble or more brave in the ready resignation with which it was accepted. And this title is necessary for Mary : without it how incomplete would her Litany be ! She would be the Queen of Virgins, of Apostles, of Confessors ; but not the Queen of Martyrs and of all the Saints. But Mary's heart was pierced with the sword ; to all intents she died—for when her Son died, then indeed life had little to offer to her.

Hers was a living death, but it was to be her probation for the deathless life she enjoys in Heaven. She suffered that she might be crowned. Her sorrows were proportioned to her holiness and dignity, and her holiness and dignity are measured by her sorrow. She is the woman clothed with the sun, because she was the woman that stood in the thickest folds of the blackness that enveloped her Son on Calvary. She is nearest to her Divine Son in Heaven, because she was nearest to Him in all His sufferings upon earth. "Man of Sorrow," Isaias called Him. "Mother of Sorrows," the Church calls her. And as to every Catholic mind Calvary will be ever dearer than Thabor, dearer than Heaven itself, so too will Mary, under the aspect of "Mother of Sorrows," be dearer than Mary, even in the joy of her Assumption. Let the angels of Heaven keep to themselves, if they will, the glorified Humanity of Jesus, with the five great wounds shining like suns, and the Woman by His side with the stars around her head and the moon beneath her feet, but leave to us the bleak hillside of Calvary, with the Crucified Humanity of Jesus, and the five wounds streaming with the Blood that saved us, and the Mother

beneath seemingly so calm, and silent, and patient, but seen by the Eternal Father to be broken-hearted in her childlessness, with a grief to which even tears would be a mockery. For here have we not the vision of God more beautiful than even Heaven can reveal it, and here have we Mary surpassing in her crucifixion the glory of her Conception, her Nativity, her Annunciation, and even her Assumption into Heaven!

The Founder of the Preaching Friars.

SOME sixty years ago a certain public lecturer delivered a series of lay sermons in a London hall on the subject of "Heroes." He had been brought up in Calvinism, and had retained its spirit after having rejected its tenets; for he believed only in a blind, brutal force, working upwards through pitiless destruction to a certain kind of progress or civilization. It was the gospel of savage strength and ferocity, of furious pride and rebellion, of Satanic malice and ingenuity—the flower and the fruit being such heroes as Luther, Mahomet, and Cromwell. Yet, such is human perversity, these strange doctrines, the very antithesis of Christian forbearance and self-abnegation, were accepted by a Christian people, and have borne in the lives of individuals and in great political upheavals no unimportant a part. It is well, then, from time to time that we, whose religion is simply that of Christ Jesus, should remember that we, too, have our heroes—men, who, from the beginning, have faced stupendous difficulties to overcome them; who have passed through terrific trials, and have come out unscathed and triumphant; who have carried their lives in their hands, and often laid them down in defence of great principles; and have passed

away, sometimes in derision and obloquy, only that their glory might be all the brighter and their fame made eternal, when the Church placed her seal on the book of their lives, and called them her heroes and her saints. But oh! how different the criterion and standard of heroism in the world and in the Church. The one deifies force, the other worships weakness; the one, savage lusts; the other, angelic purity; the one, ambition for self; the other, zeal for God; until the breach in principle and practice widens and deepens, and they stand face to face, but on opposite sides, of the tremendous gulf that runs through eternity—those whom the world glorifies as heroes, and those whom the Church consecrates as saints. Why do I insist on these facts and contrasts? Because there is a slight tendency to-day to reconcile them and merge them in one another, and because we cannot too frequently insist on the all-important principle—that the religion of the Lord Jesus, which we profess, is directly and diametrically opposed to the religion of the world; and that, therefore, it is not as a mere matter of practice and routine, but as a solemn occasional duty, we are called upon to dwell on the lives of our saints and to study the ideas that are incorporated in those lives and rendered imperishable by them.

It is fortunately not needful to dwell at great length on the life of St. Dominic. It is familiar to nearly every child of the Church, from the dream of his sainted mother at Calaroga to his own last vision of the Virgin Mother, as he lay on the ashes in his convent at Bologna, and the prayers of countless houses of his Order went up to heaven for his departing soul. It leaves me at liberty to dwell on one great fact—the central fact of his life, and one great idea—the idea that is incorporated in his Order. That fact is, that Dominic was raised up by God, as Athanasius of old, as Ignatius later on, to combat and destroy a deadly heresy; and the idea is, that the Saint's

legacy to his Order, its mission, its vocation, its history, is the destruction of similar heresies, and the conservation of divine faith by means exactly similar to those which Dominic employed.

It is difficult for us to understand in these days the conditions that obtained throughout the whole south of France under the Albigensian heresy. These were the ages of faith; and where faith was destroyed it left a desert. For, under its sunny influence, all things throve—arts and sciences, and the sweetness of domestic life, and order and the skilful government of the experienced. But here the whole brightness and fertility is suddenly blighted by one foul breath; and the whole social and religious landscape is blackened, and upturned in one seething mass of chaos and disorder. And that foul breath was heresy. It struck at the roots. It denied the Trinity, and therefore the Incarnation; and therefore the entire religious system of Christianity. And loosening all the bonds that bound society together, by the denial of these radical truths, it passed on to deny the sanctity of marriage, and all the other sacred contracts that bind and limit social organisations. It was the Reformation of the fifteenth century without its success—at least, without its final and disastrous success, for the Albigensian heresy spread from city to city, from hamlet to hamlet, there in the fair land that stretches upwards towards the towering ridges of the Pyrenees; and many of these dreadful scenes, enacted by the emancipation of human passion from legitimate control, in the terrible drama of the French Revolution, were anticipated in the cities of Southern France during the days when this dread heresy was triumphant and successful. For history is ever repeating itself; and human passions are always and in every place the same. Civilization is only the thin crust that is cast up by the volcanic fires, and then conceals them. And there

never has been, and there never shall be, any age in the world's history, when the Goddess of Reason may not be placed on the altar of faith; and that Goddess, the unspeakable! Here then was the mighty problem for Popes and Emperors and Princes, for those who had to face the horrid spectre of anarchy, irreligion, and lust, and to lay it. Councils are held and break up irresolute. Hither came Legates from Rome, empowered to treat with the heresiarchs on terms of equity and charity. They return, having gained but a problematical and temporary success. Meanwhile, the muniments of war are rapidly collected in the rebel cities; arrows are sharpened, and bows are tested; and swords are placed on the anvil, just as in the days of the Revolution. A little blood-letting will tame the insolence of Christian kings and emperors and their followers; and they of Albi are not unwilling. They have their wish. Have they not too a Raymund of Toulouse and a sympathetic King of Aragon, strong, vigorous heretics, who believe in their own good right hands and their trusty swords, against mere priests and a handful of pietists, whose hands are more used to crucifixes than battle-axes? Once more, for the hundredth time in the world's strange history, the hosts of Gideon are marshalled in all their fury and dread panoply of war against the hosts of the Lord. For these do not like bloodshed, nor the spilling of lives which the Lord God alone could create. And so they try gentle words, and soft entreaties and Christian beseechings against these furies. In vain! in vain! Strong in the lust of pride, and with all the fierce spirit of angry rebellion in their hearts, they demand battle, and if it is refused they will force it. They obtain their desire. And up and down the fair plains of Languedoc, with ever-varying success, the hosts of the Lord and of His enemies meet and lock in deadly conflict, until at last, beneath the walls of Toulouse, the great final struggle takes place.

The hosts of the enemy are legion, and a King and a Count are at their head. The hosts of the Lord are a handful, and only a Crusader leads them. But something from the beginning is clearly wrong. Numbers, and strength of hand, and science of mind avail not. There is some invisible power silently interfering, some tremendous, supernatural force, like that under which the armies of Sennacherib melted of old. Else how can it be that the vast legions of the Albigenses are driven hastily and in dread disorder from the field, leaving behind them twenty thousand of their dead, and amongst them the excommunicated King, and here, in the hosts of the Lord, is but one brave Knight, calm in the consecration of death, and eight Christian warriors by his side? It is the old, old story! "Thou hast sent forth Thy anger, and devoured them like stubble. Thou hast stretched forth Thy hand, and the earth has swallowed them up. Thou wert the Captain of the people, whom in mercy Thou hast redeemed!"

Yet the work was not done. Souls are not gained with swords. Pride has never been conquered by defeat. Something else is necessary. "This kind of devil is not cast out, except by prayer and fasting." And all this time, whilst men's passions raged furiously, a very humble man, obscure and unknown, had come up from sunny Spain, over the snow-clad mountains, into what were now the deserts of Albi. His progress was slow, for he trod with bare feet the dusty roads, as his Master of old trod the burning sands of the Judean plains; but the fierce southern sun was not more hot than the heart within him with zeal for the honour of God which was at stake, for the souls of men which were in peril. During all the years of the Albigensian wars Dominic passed from city to city, from town to town, from hamlet to hamlet, preaching, arguing, working miracles in the name of Christ; above all, exhibiting everywhere the sublime patience and long-suffering of his

Divine Master. He passed through as many perils as St. Paul; he was scoffed at, laughed at, derided, as he passed gently through the ranks of these dreadful heretics, whose evil passions, unrestrained by faith or reason, had transformed them into wild beasts. And, after long days of apparently ineffectual preaching, he spent nights even in their taverns, arguing and reasoning with proud infidels, and trying to convince them of the reasonableness of faith, the unreason of disbelief. Then two sudden inspirations reached him. He found he could not work alone, and in face of every opposition he established his immortal Order, which, with the sole weapon of preaching, was destined to win back a world to the Church and God; and the great Queen-Mother of the Catholic Church, she, who is proudly saluted in the Divine Office as the "sole destroyer of heresy thoughout the universal world," placed in his hands that simple form of prayer which, adapted alike to all intelligences, has been the means of subduing and sanctifying all hearts. Then, in the full strength of his manhood, and the full flush of triumph, Dominic passed out to his reward, leaving behind not only the example of a heroic life in the best sense of the word, but, what is of more importance, the germ of a great idea that has inspired, and shall continue to inspire, not only his followers, but all who are brought under their happy influence, to the end of time. For, have you ever considered, you, who are reading these pages, whose eyes follow the black and white habit of the Dominicans, as they pass to and fro to their duties—have you ever considered what was the great central idea of this Order, the cause of its being, the animating force of its persistence and success? And you, who have travelled further, and seen that black and white habit gleaming across the pages of history—clothing the great doctors of mediæval scholasticism, the teachers of the great universities—bending over the charts of Columbus in the

Spanish convent, and leaning over the prow of his ships in the far unknown seas—entering the Aztec cities, side by side with Cortez, or accompanying Pizarro to execution; a gleam of hope, as from another world to the negroes, whom Las Casas emancipated, or a vestment of martyrdom, as when the flames wrapped it round in the market-place of Florence, and the great soul of Savonarola passed from its dereliction to its glory; have you ever asked what all this symbolised, or what was the undying principle beneath it; for beneath or above all things there is a symbol and a soul, just as of old the breast-plate of the High Priest perfected his sacrificial robes, and in its mysterious words denoted the awful character of his ministry? Or, passing into the realms of intellect, have you considered what was the basis of the teachings of Albert the Great? or what spirit penetrated and possessed the greater soul of Thomas Aquinas, as he built, out of no book, but his crucifix, those solid bulwarks of Catholic truth, founded on the most perfect system of Grecian logic? Or what was the central idea that winged the words of Vincent Ferrer with fiery eloquence, and drew after him multitudes, caught not only by the charm of his words, but by the impetuosity of his zeal? Nay, it is not a difficult conjecture. It is written broad on Dominican history, that as the characteristic of the Augustinian is love for God; of the Cistercian, silence; of the Carthusian, solitude; of the Jesuit, obedience; of the Franciscan, poverty; of the Vincentian, charity; so the spirit of the Dominican Order, created by its founder, and animating its work during its long history of six hundred years, is zeal for the truth, the perpetuation and preservation of the Catholic faith!

No light words these, and no humble destiny! But words fraught with all the mighty meanings that are associated with the history of the most unique and powerful organisation the

world has ever seen; and a destiny, proportioned in dignity and importance with that of the Empire Church, which, springing from the mustard-seed, has overshadowed in its springtime and maturity all the nations of the earth!

But let us grasp this idea more firmly; let us see how it worked in the two great fields of human energy—thought and action.

The Dominican idea, in the realm of pure intellect, was embodied in St. Thomas. St. Thomas was a saint and therefore must have attained to perfect moral heroism. Yet, we are rather accustomed to regard him as probably the most perfect intellect, ever sent to inhabit a weak, mortal frame. If there could be such a thing as passionless, pure intellect, incorporated in a human body, that would be the intellect of St. Thomas. There was no question of human science that he could not grasp and hold. He was absolutely fearless in his speculations. He anticipated every objection that ever was, or ever could be made, against Catholic Christianity; and like a powerful athlete, in absolute self-confidence, he allows his adversaries every intellectual advantage, even placing new weapons in their hands, only to manifest his own strength all the more clearly by their absolute and overwhelming defeat. All that heresy could urge, all that infidelity could invent against the Church and the Gospel, he supplies with fearless speculation; until students, alarmed at his boldness, rush onwards to his replies, only to find that these are unanswerable and final. He avoids nothing. He shirks nothing. He has no fear, because he knows there is no danger. He strains principles, until they seem to break in his hands; and then shows them to the world as absolute certainties which no human power can dissolve or destroy. And hence, he has left in his Summa an authentic and perfected code of philosophy and theology, which has been accepted by the Church as the authoritative embodiment of her creeds and definitions.

Yet, he has not crippled human thought, nor limited human freedom. Within the bounds of revelation, which are as brass, the mind has ample room to indulge in every exercise of philosophical speculation. What was the inspiration of this sublime intellect? What were its motives? What was its power? Some great spirits have wrought and travailed for love for fame; some, to found a great school to perpetuate their name and their doctrines; some alas! through sheer, personal dislike of the Lord Jesus; some, for bread; some, for national honour; some, for preferments and emoluments; some, for the glory of their universities; some for pure love of learning and wisdom for its own sake! But this Dominican friar, who taught at Cologne with Albertus Magnus; at Paris, at Rome, at Perugia, at Orvieto; who was acknowledged by Urban IV. and Clement IV. to be the first theologian of his age; who refused the Archbishopric of Naples; who was invited to the Council of Lyons as the first authority in theological science; and whose works were placed, side by side, with the Bible, before the assembled Fathers of the Council of Trent, had but one ambition and one reward. That was the ambition to place, once and for all, the dogmas of the Church on a permanent philosophic basis; and when he had succeeded in doing so, and was questioned by his Crucifix: "Thomas, thou hast written well of me? What reward dost thou seek?" his sublime answer, disdaining all lesser things, was: "No other reward but Thyself, dear Lord!"

If, then, we find the Dominicans maintaining their intellectual supremacy in the schools and universities of the Church, can we wonder that she should commit to their safe keeping the custody of Divine faith in the great outside world of action? Can there be a greater honour or distinction than this commission from the Universal Church to sift and discriminate amidst all the horrible confusion of mediæval

and modern thought that which is the eternal truth of God from the shifting and unstable opinions of men's minds?

This is not the place to enter into a theological exposition or historical defence of great ecclesiastical tribunals. Like so many kindred historical subjects, their action has been so twisted and deformed by the pens of ignorant or prejudiced historians, that even to unthinking and unreflective Catholics their spirit and manifestations appear to be defenceless. But to us, what do these great tribunals for searching out and determining error mean? What was their purport? Their mission? Their spirit? Separate the Inquisition from the action of the civil authorities, and what do we find it? An engine for the arbitrary suppression of human liberty? No! A watchtower on the walls of the City of God? Yes! An indication of the Church's narrowmindedness and illiberalism? No! An absolute proof of the eternal vigilance of the Church over every shred and particle of the Divine Deposit committed to her care? Yes! Nor need we seek for any other proof of the Church's divine origin and divine protection than this—that she alone has ever manifested a jealousy, a sensitiveness about Christian truth, that is prepared to make any sacrifice, even of the most extreme kind, rather than abate one single assumption of her prerogatives, or cut down one single dogmatic truth to suit the exigencies of the times, or the ambition or lust of the individual.

This unique independence, this fidelity to the motto, "Semper eadem"! amidst the rise and fall of dynasties and empires, the ebb and flow of human ideas, has extorted the reluctant admiration of her adversaries. It was this spirit that made her young martyrs refuse to put the pinch of incense in the thuribles which smoked before the altars of Minerva and Aphrodite in the Roman forum or the Greek prætorium; it was this jealousy about the smallest iota of

faith, that made her wage war against the Arians for three hundred years for the sake of one single vowel in one word of her Creed; it was the same zeal that made Polycarp reply to Marcion's: "Dost thou not know me, Polycarp?" "Yes, I know thee well; I know thee, thou first-born of Satan." It was the same spirit that freely sacrificed all Northern Europe at the time of the Reformation, rather than yield one single clause in her Confession of Faith; and even in our own time, when we behold a large section of the Anglican Church craving for unity, if only the Pope would abandon the dogmas of Papal Infallibility and the Immaculate Conception, the same "non possumus" comes from the Eternal Church. We cannot change the truths of eternity at the behests of mortal men.

This, then, is the spirit of the Church and her tribunals—the same in the thirteenth century as in the first; the same in the twentieth century as in the thirteenth—no coquetting with the awful spirit of truth! As the distinctive mark of heresy is toleration, so broad that no denial can offend it, because of its easy indifference to truth, so the distinctive mark of Catholicity is a delicate sensitiveness about everything that can defile it. Hence, mother of arts and letters as she is, the Church will condemn the fairest of the former, the most precious of the latter, if it infringes upon truth. No poem, however divine in thought or music, will she accept, if beneath all its beauty she detects the harsh note of error; no science, however beneficial to mankind, will she adopt or recommend, if it rings false to divine truth. Her bravest advocates she has mercilessly condemned for even the appearance of error in their very defence of herself. Her greatest apologists she has censured when, in their zeal for her glory, they have deflected from the path of truth. Here there is no mercy, no compromise! Friends and unfaithful alike must go

down before this awful magisterium; and even her dearest and most heroic children, who have given their lives to glorify her, she refuses to place upon her altars if in their writings can be discovered one line that mars the awful beauty and sublimity of that which is the first-born of the daughters of God. And surely I do not exaggerate when I say that the guardianship of this sacred trust, committed to the children of St. Dominic, is not only the supreme honour of the Order, but a responsibility which demands on their part zeal, fidelity, discretion, and intelligence, commensurate with so great a vocation and so sublime a trust.

And yet, their vocation in the world of action does not terminate there. It is not enough to guard the sacred fire. They have to scatter it broadcast over the face of the earth. "I came to cast fire on the earth."

Here again is the Dominican vocation. The thoughts of the study and the cloister, crystallised in the dogmatic definition of faith, cannot be locked up in cabinets or buried in the sepulchres of books. They are for men, and must be placed in the hands of men. They are for men's souls, and must be dropped into men's souls; and this by the sublime agency of the preaching of God's Word. "Preach the Gospel!" And, equipped with all the knowledge of the sacred science, and with eloquence, taught not by the arts of the rhetorician, but by the Spirit of God, the friars-preachers for six hundred years have been the promoters of Divine science amongst the faithful; and preaching, as is meet, was supported by prayer —and that prayer, the golden chain that links every soul that uses it to the feet of Mary's throne in heaven. And the voice of eloquence and the voice of prayer commingled have been the all-powerful weapons with which the children of St. Dominic have combated and vanquished the enemies of Christ, even to our day. For, have we been merely raking up

the ashes of dead history as the sport of an idle moment? Have we been disinterring the bones of past heresies, and building them up anew for the mere pleasure of dissolving them and sending them back to their dishonoured graves? Albigenses, Inquisitions, Schoolmen, Crusaders, what have we to do with those things, musty and moth-eaten historical relics —we, who are distracted by the multitude and variety of modern topics, which enchain all our interest, and challenge all our sympathies? Ah, if a few thoughts on St. Dominic and his Order were bare of fruitful application, if not devoid of interest, it would be an idle waste of time and trouble to make remembrance of him and the white-robed monks that call themselves by his name and inherit his spirit.

But is the Albigensian heresy a thing of the past? Alas, no! If the Church is immortal, heresy, that is the insubordination and pride of human intellect, never shall cease. Up they come, one after another, like waves of the sea—heresy after heresy, schism after schism, falling, rising, destroyed, recreated by the malignant vitality of human pride. Is the Albigensian heresy dead? Is there no denial of the Trinity, of the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ in our days? Are the ordained ministers of Christian Churches uninfected by the malady? Is the sanctity of marriage respected and recognised? And the sacredness of contracts? And is the immortality of the soul, with all its tremendous consequences, admitted? Are the Sacraments honoured as channels of Divine grace? and authority respected as appointed and delegated of God? No, we must admit it, a greater spirit of decency and a larger humanity prevent the horrors that desolated Languedoc in the thirteenth century, but the same evil doctrines that sapped society in those far-off days are here in our midst, and are propagated with the same zeal and the same appeal for toleration.

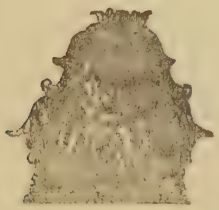
And just as the great need of that age was the love for the faith, the jealousy for Christ's honour, the sensitiveness about every jot and tittle of revealed truth, so the great want of our age is a holy illiberalism and intolerance of abstract error wherever the truth of God—the faith of Christ—is assailed. St. Teresa said—"I would give my life for a single rubric of the Church." Can we say the same for its greater doctrines? Yet it is the Catholic instinct. You saw how it showed itself in those early martyrs, who refused the least shadow of compromise with idolatry; you see it to-day in our cities, where the most patient, most tolerant, most unaggressive of peoples are stung into madness by the least aggression on their faith. They bore every material and temporal loss with resignation—lands, homes, schools, liberty; but the moment an attempt is made to rob them of their faith they rage like lions, and the world marvels at their intolerance. But it is their unconquerable instinct—the instinct of the true Catholic in every age—the instinct of Dominic—the tradition of his Order. Where it exists, there is vital faith; where it ceases to exist, you have dead souls.

If, then, I have drawn a faithful, if faint, portrait of St. Dominic and his times; if I have rightly interpreted his spirit; if I have shown what seems to me so clear a vision—his white monks, standing as watchmen on the towers of the City of God, what shall I ask my readers to think and do, so that my thoughts may not be altogether barren and ineffectual? What, but this: Hold fast by these awful truths, so tremendous in their dread import that the affirmation of them seems to lift up earth to heaven, and to make it, with all its shortcomings, one of the many mansions in His Father's House, of which Christ our Master spoke, and the denial of which seems to plunge earth down to hell, and to make it one of the circles of that vast Inferno, of which it is difficult to say whether the dreams

of poets or the teachings of the Holy Spirit make its terrors more appalling.

In faith and hope await for the short term of life the final revelation. Heed not the vagaries of men's intellects. Yesterday they said they knew nothing. To-day, in their test-tubes, they have discovered the Infinitely Little! To-morrow they will sweep the Heavens and discover the Infinitely Great!

But all these things, which reason grasps faintly, Faith holds firmly. And amongst them, the supreme fact, of which we have no dim consciousness, but a certainty as great as that which affirms our existence, namely, that whatever the Divine Mind has chosen to reveal to weak, human intellect is contained in the Deposit of Faith, once and for ever committed to the Church, and whose most consoling doctrine is that this crust of clay contains an immaterial and immortal spirit, which ever struggles through the bars of its prison for a glimpse of the better land, and whose very miseries are but the pathetic plaint of a homeless outcast for the light, the beauty, and the security of its Father's House.



Teresa of Jesus and of Carmel.

THE Church, as we have been often told, is an empire in the midst of the world. And by reason of its hostility to the world, its ways, its practices, its modes of thought, are essentially dissimilar. Yet, in some particulars we find that, in an obscure and perverted manner, the world's ways correspond with ours. For there appears to be in the world the tradition of some lost faith, which still commands them to worship what they believe to be superior excellence. A certain loyalty and submission whilst living and a dumb stone statue when dead is the reward the world pays to those whom it worships. You can see the traces of this strange semblance of Divine faith in the cities of the world. In public thoroughfares, on the pediments of mighty buildings, in halls and corridors, we can see those white statues glistening in the sun, or those statues in bronze looking dark and defiant at Time. The tide of human life passes, and looks at these statues with glances as cold as themselves, and is apparently as unconscious of the excellence of the being represented, as the statue is of themselves. This is because the statue represents nothing that is lasting or abiding, it is because it represents something human and imperfect, which cannot satisfy the

everlasting desires of man's heart it is because it represents an emotion and not a faith, it is because it preaches vanity and not wisdom. And somehow the multitude cannot persuade itself that the prototype of that statue is anything but dust—cannot imagine that he is numbered amongst the children of God, who have been called from the struggle to receive the crown, who have kept the faith and received the promises.

How vastly different, how sublime, how deep and lasting, and how true is this same worship of heroism in the Church. A sound goes forth through the Church, "a saint is dead." Men take up reverently and piously the poor body, worn by emaciation and suffering, and place it in the grave. Relics are gathered, and now and again the report of some stupendous miracle is noised abroad. But it is only after the lapse of centuries, when the poor idol of the world is forgotten, that the fame of the saint grows brighter and brighter, that the passionate love of the Catholic heart for God's holy ones is expressed, that churches are built and statues erected in his name, and that pious hearts place themselves under his protection, trying to imitate his virtues, and trusting in his intercession with God. It is because the lesson taught by that saint is the lesson daily taught by our religion, it is because the worship of that saint has its foundations laid deep down on those eternal principles of justice and truth which are as essential as breath to our existence, it is because that saint has shown us in his life the beauty and loveliness of God, it is because the example of that saint has touched us, it is because the sayings of that saint have instructed us, it is because the prayers of that saint have helped us, and because the virtues of the saint are to us the perpetual shadow of those divine attributes, surpassing all understanding, to worship which is sanctity here—to see and adore which is glory and happiness hereafter. Yet another supreme difference between

the Church and the world. In the strange Babel of creeds that jar and jostle with each other, outside the pale of Catholicity, woman has no place. And in civil and political life her mission of blessedness is not recognised. Hence, you may look in vain for any recognition of woman's high character and exalted privileges in the temples that are consecrated to the worship of heroes. And even in the crowd of gifted and exalted personages that have figured in the history of mankind, you will not find that a tablet has been raised, a statue erected, a temple built to the memory of one. Because her place has not been recognised in the economy of creation, because her capacity for excellence has not been understood, because her vocation to bless and heal and sanctify has not been acknowledged, nor can the world understand those virtues, that sublimity of sanctity that is reached in the cloister and the world by those who, in a spirit of self-sacrifice, give their lives to the service of God and their fellow-creatures. It is only in the Catholic Church—mother and mistress of saints, the Catholic Church, with her perpetual vision of "Mother and Child," that smiles upon our childhood, that strengthens our manhood, that blesses our labours, that haunts us in our dreams, that sweetens our last moments—it is only in the Catholic Church, that recognises the glory of virginity, and yet places a sinful woman side by side with the "spotless Virgin"—it is only in the Catholic Church, that preaches the sanctity of marriage and can discover no more exalted image of itself than that of "Divine Spouse"—it is only there that woman is raised to her proper level, it is only there she has full scope for the exercise of her virtues and powers, it is only there that with liberty unchecked, she can use the mighty power with which God has invested her, for the instruction and solace, the conversion or sanctification of mankind. And, therefore, too, it is only there that she is properly esteemed, it is only in the

Catholic Church that her power of reaching the height of perfection, which we call sanctity, is worthily and gratefully acknowledged.

In the beautiful Catholic land of Spain there is a beautiful province called Castile, and in Castile is a city very ancient called Avila. It was known formerly as the city of cavaliers; it is now known as the city of saints, and there St. Teresa was born in the year 1515. Before she had attained the age of six years, she had already given marvellous indications of the sanctity for which she was afterwards so illustrious. And this sanctity of her infancy she attributes, under heaven, to what? Let Catholic fathers and mothers take note of the very first words of her life, as written by herself. "The eminent piety of my parents," she says, "would have sufficed, had I not been so unfaithful, to have established me in the path of virtue. My father took infinite delight in the reading of good books, and he had several translated into the Castilian language, that his children might read them. This active piety, and the care with which my mother made us pray to God, and inspired us with devotion to our Blessed Lady and the saints, excited in my soul the first sparks of piety at the age, I think, of six or seven years." The Saint had three sisters and nine brothers, and amongst the latter was one who was her special favourite. He was about the same age as the saint, and was called Rodriguez. The two children had built for themselves a little hermitage near the church, and there, day after day, they met to pray and read the Lives of the Saints. By degrees, the heroism—the self-sacrifice of the martyrs of the early Church—began to impress the tender hearts of those children. That strange fire which Christ came to cast upon the world took possession of them, and it became their ambition to suffer martyrdom and pass through short, quick agony to that Heaven after which they aspired. One day, unknown to

any one but God, they left their home, the brother ten years of age, and Teresa only six, and set out with the object of travelling through Spain and begging their bread from house to house, until they were enabled to pass over to Morocco, where they hoped to be put to death by the Moors and thus receive the crown of martyrdom. It was not God's will, however—He had other designs on His Saint. Not through the quick, short spasms of a violent death, but through thirty years of slow agony was St. Teresa to win her crown. Before the two young martyrs had gone a mile on the road to Salamanca, one of their uncles met them and led them home, where again they resumed the penance, the readings and prayers which they thought they were abandoning for ever They had their hours of solitude, they distributed the little alms which they begged daily, and often during the day they recited the Rosary, to which their mother had a special devotion. When Teresa was twelve years of age, that mother was taken to her reward, and the young saint, with her heart full of sorrow and pain, cast herself in her little sanctuary before a statue of our Blessed Lady, and begged of that great Queen to assume the place of a mother towards her. "This cry of a simple and childlike heart was heard," she says. "I had a mother in the Queen of Heaven. From that moment I have never recommended myself to that Sovereign Queen that I have not experienced, in a visible manner, her all-powerful help. If, having strayed from God, I have returned, my return has been her work."

Did Teresa stray from God really? She did—not, indeed, to the extent of losing His friendship and His grace, but so that her first fervour sadly diminished, and she placed herself in real danger of losing God for ever. With humility becoming a saint, she herself tells the story of her defection from God, and it is a story full of warning and terror for

us. With all her many virtues, her mother had one fault. After the labours of the day, she had the habit of amusing herself by reading works of romance, the tales of the cavaliers of those days. If she had read those books in secret, it is just possible that the evil would not have been so great; but, unfortunately, she put those books into the hands of her child, on the vain and silly pretext used often enough nowadays, of cultivating her mind and her taste. The effect was sudden and disastrous. In a moment, as it were, the love of God became cold in her soul, prayer became distasteful, penance became impossible—the child of God, the spouse of Heaven, had become a young lady of the world. Her father was silent, but angry. Then he spoke; spoke words of holy anger to the incautious mother, spoke words of tenderness and warning to his child. In vain. "I saw no harm," says the Saint, "in passing many hours of the day and night in this occupation; all the time hiding myself from my father. I read those books with delight; I was never at rest until a fresh romance could be found." Then came a taste for all these vanities and frivolities that are so dear to the heart that does not tend solely to God, and then another more terrible danger, that of evil company. She had at this time a sister who was serving God with all fidelity. She abandoned the society of the sister for that of another companion, who was deeply versed in all that strange science that is so familiar to worldlings. Her parents forbade her to keep this company; but under one pretext or another, she brought this companion to her home, made herself her disciple, and learned from her many things that impaired, but did not destroy, her innocence. For a wholesome fear of God still withheld her from utter ruin, and during all that terrible time, He, who had such great designs on her, did not suffer her to be contaminated by mortal sin.

"I am terrified," she writes in after years, "to see the evil that may be wrought by evil company, particularly in time of youth. If I had not proof of it, I would not believe it. It is true that the conversation of this young girl produced in me the saddest change. I am convinced that if at that age I had met with pious persons I would have persevered in virtue." After three months of such a life, her father, anxious and earnest, sent her to a convent school, where, after a few weeks of terrible temptation, of depression and sadness, she recovered her former fervour, and with that fervour peace of mind. Many years after, when she enjoyed the closest and most intimate friendship with God, He vouchsafed to show her how great was His displeasure with her during this time. "One day," she says, "while at prayer, I found myself in an instant, without knowing how, transferred body and soul into hell. I understood that God wished me to see the place that the demons had prepared for me, and which I would have merited by the sins into which I would have fallen, had I not changed my life. It lasted only a moment, but though I should live yet many years, it will be impossible for me ever to lose the memory of it."

The Saint remained one year and a half at this convent and then returned home. After a little time she began to experience the first stirrings of that special grace, which God confers on his favourite children, the grace of a Divine vocation. Many were the strange thoughts and temptations that assailed her, but grace conquered; and having read the epistles of St. Jerome, epistles that breathe in every line the most burning love for God, she became convinced that God was beckoning to her to come out from the world, and to consecrate herself entirely and irrevocably to His service. She entered, at the age of eighteen, the order of

Our Lady of Mount Carmel at the Convent of the Incarnation at Avila. During her novitiate she experienced the first of that long series of sufferings with which it pleased God to afflict her. She describes her sufferings in detail. It is enough to say that she suffered the tortures of crucifixion —her life was a living death. Afflicted in every sense, she never lost confidence in God, she had ever on her lips the words of Holy Job: "Since we have received good things from the hands of God, why should we not receive evil things?"

Her illness reached a crisis in 1536, when she was twenty-one years old. For four days prior to the Feast of the Assumption in that year she remained insensible. Extreme Unction was administered, her grave was dug, and in a neighbouring convent, the Office had commenced for her soul, when suddenly she recovered consciousness, went to confession and received Holy Communion with extraordinary fervour. She recovered from immediate danger, but found that she was paralysed, and thus she remained helpless and suffering for three years more. All this time her one succour, her one comfort, was prayer, continued union with God by mental and vocal prayer. She was perfectly resigned to God's holy will, yet she hoped to be healed that she might serve God with greater fervour. "Finding myself still so young," she says, "struck with paralysis, and seeing the sad state to which earthly physicians had reduced me, I resolved to have recourse to those of Heaven. To obtain my restoration to health, I took for advocate and protector the glorious St. Joseph, and I commended myself earnestly to him. His assistance showed itself in the most visible manner. This tender father of my soul, this well-beloved protector hastened to relieve me from bodily suffering, as he had saved me from more terrible peril of another kind,

I do not remember ever to have asked anything of him, up to this moment, that he did not grant me. Knowing now, by long experience, the marvellous power of St. Joseph's intercession with God, I would wish to persuade every one to honour him with special love. I have permission also to say, I feel a special pleasure in writing it, that very many like myself are indebted to this great Saint for very many and very special favours." This sentiment of affection for St. Joseph was not a temporary feeling of gratitude, it was what I may call the special faith and piety of her life. To St. Teresa undoubtedly must be attributed the origin of the marvellous propagation of that devotion which to-day is universal in the Universal Church. She was the first to found a Catholic Church in his honour. Of seventeen convents of her order which she founded, twelve were dedicated to him; in all she established devotion to him, all she placed under his protection, the statue of St. Joseph decorated the porticoes of all her convents. Her perpetual advice to her religious was: "Although you honour many saints as your protectors, have a particular devotion to St. Joseph, whose power with God is so great." She left this devotion as her special legacy to her Order of Mount Carmel. And well they accepted it. Before the end of the eighteenth century, a hundred and fifty churches in that order were consecrated to this great saint, and the Order merited from Benedict XIV. the lofty praise of having been the instrument of Divine Providence in carrying from the East to the West this beautiful devotion, and establishing the worship of St. Joseph under the most solemn rites of the Church.

In one of the Psalms the mighty sun is described as "exulting like a giant to run his course. His going out is from the end of Heaven, and his circuit even to the end thereof. And there is no one that can hide himself from

his heat " Such a description might now be applied to our Saint. One by one, sometimes gently, sometimes severely, her Divine Master struck from her soul the chains that are forged by corrupt nature or evil habits, until she felt herself free to run along joyously and steadily in that brilliant career of sanctity which God marked out for her. I have said that God used a certain severity towards her ; for God, we know, is a jealous God ; and if He visits any soul with special marks of predilection, He cannot bear to see in it the slightest imperfection. Hence, one day, in a singular and surprising manner, He corrected one of the faults which still remained to remind St. Teresa that the work was not yet completed. She experienced a certain pleasure in seeing for a certain time each day a certain friend to whom she was much attached. One day, while conversing with her, suddenly our Divine Lord appeared, with a countenance full of severity, and by a secret inspiration taught her that this amusement, trivial as it might appear, was very displeasing to Him. A terrible fear seized her ; she now saw clearly what God expected from her, all these particular friendships she renounced, and from that hour she could say : " What have I in Heaven, and, besides Thee, what do I desire on earth ? "

We will draw a veil over the next eighteen years of her life. It was made so sacred by prayer and vigil, it was made so sorrowful and pathetic by continued suffering, it was made so exalted by daily apparitions of her Divine Spouse and Joseph and Mary, it was made so entirely supernatural, so completely removed beyond and above anything that we see and experience, that I should be speaking of things I could not understand were I to attempt to convey to my readers ever so faint an idea of marvels and miracles, of visions and apparitions, which became familiar occurrences in the everyday life of the Saint. And the mighty lever that

thus lifted her far above mundane things, into this cloudland of supernatural beings, was prayer—constant, never-ceasing perpetual prayer—attentive and reverential prayer—heartfelt, earnest prayer—prayer that came, not from the mechanism of the lips, but prayer that welled up in one continuous tide from the heart, and overflowed in sighs nadtears and never-ending cries to Heaven.

Towards the year 1562 a new mission began to open to our Saint. As our Divine Saviour spent thirty years in solitude and prayer, before He commenced His short mission of three years, so He prepared St. Teresa for a great missionary work, by the life of seclusion of which I have spoken. That missionary work was the reform of the Carmelite Order. Owing to many circumstances, principally extreme destitution, the Order had fallen away from that primitive perfection that was practised and ordained by its founders. St. Teresa had an inspiration from Almighty God that she was to be the agent in the hands of the Most High for the accomplishment of this great work. She met disappointment and discouragement enough to terrify a weaker mind. Her design was rejected and frowned upon by all whom she consulted. Her ecclesiastical superior objected, and it was only after six months of earnest prayer and entreaty that she succeeded in obtaining the necessary sanction. On the feast of St. Bartholomew, 1562, her first convent was founded, and four sisters, with herself, took possession. A terrible outcry arose ; the populace threatened to burn the building. A meeting of magistrates was held, and it was about to be finally decided that it was necessary for the public peace that the convent should be destroyed, and the nuns dispersed, when a Dominican priest arose and persuaded the city magnates to defer a decision until some further occasion. There was nothing further heard of the

matter. The sisters were left in peace, and our Saint set herself in downright earnest to accomplish this reform, on which her heart was set. Without earthly appliances or human help, trusting solely in her beautiful faith, that it was the work of God, and that He should see to it, she went from city to city of Spain, everywhere introducing her new scheme of reform, everywhere founding convents for the ardent religious whom she inspired with all her zeal. During this time she founded thirty-two monasteries, fourteen for Carmelite friars, eighteen for Carmelite nuns. Then, after twenty years of active labour, she rested from her labour, but it was no earthly rest. But God removed from her for a moment that sustaining power which had supported her during life, in spite of mortal diseases and superhuman sacrifices and labours, and so she passed away to Heaven in the sixty-seventh year of her age, on the fourth of October, the feast of St. Francis.

The life of every saint of God will be to us hereafter a judgment, inasmuch as the life of every saint is given to us for a lesson and example. And as St. Augustine, trembling and afraid to abandon an evil habit, was brought face to face with the august form of Chastity, and shown the crowd of weak boys and tender virgins who followed her majestic example, and asked could he not do as they were doing, so too, from time to time, Almighty God puts before us the example of some mighty saint, and stimulates us to zeal and ardour by similiar questionings. And sometimes, on reading or hearing the life of a saint, we feel as if we were smitten by the hand of God, and asked "What are we doing?" And living in these strange times, when the best and wisest of us are bewildered, where there is nothing but perplexities and forebodings of evil, when our souls are torn asunder in that insane attempt we are making to serve God and serve the

world, it is well for us that we have the writings of such a saint as Teresa to enlighten us—the example of such a saint to inspire us.

Looking across the mists of three centuries, we may see our Saint looking on us with eyes of ineffable tenderness, we may hear her voice sounding like the death-bell those eternal truths, which, if we are not lost, we must study and understand, and make the guiding lights of our lives. There are those writings and sayings of hers, every word of which seems to have been written with a flame of fire. There is the terrible lesson taught by her one early fault. There is her warning voice sounding from the awful depths of eternity against the sins of novel-reading and company-keeping. There is the beautiful life of sixty-seven years, spent without one single mortal sin. There are the forty years of quiet seclusion, every day sending up to God the perfumed incense of her prayers and penances. There are twenty years of her missionary life—twenty years of fruitful labour—again for God. Put side by side with all this the poor paltry lives we are leading, and let us ask ourselves: Do we really expect a reward from God and for what? We may buy back the time we have sinfully squandered, if only for the future we are faithful. And how shall we be? Is there nothing, O Lord, to keep us steadfast in Thy service? Is there nothing to bind us fast to Thee, so that neither the powers of darkness nor our own traitorous passions would lead us away from Thee? Again, let us consult our Saint, who tells us that from the moment she had the happiness of seeing the adorable beauty of her Divine Lord, nothing in the world could offer to her sight anything that could touch her, or occupy her thoughts. Everything she saw, so far from attracting her, filled her with disgust, when she compared them to the beauty and excellences she discovered in her Jesus.

An Aged and a Youthful Confessor.

"Let the old men with the younger praise the name of the Lord; for His name alone is exalted."—Ps. cxlviii. 12.

I.—St. Alphonsus Liguori.

THERE is an empire in the midst of the empires of the world, and its laws are not formed by flesh and blood, and its praises are not on the lips of men, and its glory is not that which perishes when the grave has closed, and the epitaph is written. It is conterminous with the empires of the earth, for it is throned on all the dwelling-places of men; yet it reaches out into eternity, and angels are its subjects, and archangels its ministers. As subtle as the spirit of air, it envelopes this material world, and penetrates into high places, and into the lowliest, and the world has raged against it, and sought to destroy it, yet it abides in its strength, and even time will not touch it, for it is sealed with the seal of immortality. Strange and mysterious are its teachings and its laws, making little of earth and the desires of men, and for ever preaching another world around us, above us, within us, inhabited by spirits, whose transcendent strength and beauty shall be ours, if we learn to despise the trappings of earthly pride and the desires of a nature that is growing corrupt, and try to lift ourselves even to the full stature of the perfection which was ours before we fell. And the subjects of that empire, whilst toiling, like ordinary men, live half their lives in that same world of spirits, and speak to visions that faith creates, and take ideal types of sanctity for models, and dream of great white thrones in the clouds, where yet they shall dwell, and pray to

unseen beings for strength in peril, and for hope when they faint, and believe that power descends upon them from the skies, and that dark spirits vanish into the nether hell, when the legions of Heaven sweep from the clouds at the voice, or at the command of prayer. And this empire, too, has its heroes, those who had keener faith and insight in all the awful mysteries that exist around us, who made themselves more like the angels by becoming less like to men, who laboured to extend the dominion of Jesus Christ—on whom the spirit of God was more fully poured out, and who were to their fellow-men as voices crying in the wilderness, and as pillars of fire in a darkened land.

Such beyond doubt was the wonderful Saint, Alphonsus, who, after a laborious and fruitful life, passed about one hundred years ago to his reward.

In the empire of the Church, of which I have spoken, there are two purifying and ennobling elements which are the lot of all humanity; but which, when duly consecrated, are the means given us by God, to repair the sad wounds of a fallen humanity, and make us worthy of our angelic destiny. To fallen Adam, it was said: "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou labour." The second Adam said: "If any man will be My disciple, let him take up his cross." To work and to suffer is the common lot of man, to work and to suffer and thereby to lift oneself above the earth—this is the making of saints. And I think we shall come to a full understanding of St. Alphonsus, if we consider his life under this two-fold aspect, if we study the marvellous deeds he accomplished, and still more, the martyrdom he endured with the fortitude of the early saints, at the hands of men, and even at the hands of God.

It was a happy day for St. Alphonsus and the Church—that day, when puffed up with a vain conceit of his great intellectual powers, he was suddenly plunged into an agony

of shame before his legal brethren and the vast assemblage of his countrymen—shame at defeat, where he was most assured of victory—deeper shame, for he appeared to the world merely as a casuist and a quibbler, who for the sake of a momentary triumph had sacrificed justice and truth. For a whole month he had laboured at his desk, piling up argument after argument, until the fair fabric rose before him, clear, perfect, flawless, and he had counted on the applause of his friends and the discomfiture of his enemies—and behold! the fair fabric has dissolved at a single word, and he leaves the court a shamed and humble man, and the bitter cry of Solomon rises from his heart: "Vanity of vanities and all is vanity." Not all, Alphonsus, not all! Lo! here at hand is work that shall not perish; lo! here at hand is spiritual and intellectual labour that shall not fail in its fruit and its reward; lo! here is toil, not the poor gain of wealth, which the rust will consume and thieves will steal, not the weaving of vain cobwebs of passing glory, which the hand of death will tear asunder; but treasures, which will last for your enjoyment during the long years of eternity, and glory that cannot fade, for it emanates from Him," who is the splendour of eternal light and the unspotted mirror of God's majesty." For here, round about in this Neapolitan land, are souls sick unto death with weariness and sin. The burthen of life presses heavily upon them. Under the sweltering sun they labour, and seek their reward in the black bread and squalid den which they call home; and sometimes they seek shelter beneath the walls of their village church, and mutter a few prayers that have lost their meaning for them, and lift eyes of despair to the rude crosses, which tell them, too, of suffering, but have lost their sweet symbolism of mercy and love. For religion is dead or decaying amongst these rude people; and the divine story of infinite love and patience has lost its life-giving power and strength, and has become merely as an

empty legend ; and even the Madonna, the ever-present, ever-loving Madonna, seems to have left the earth, and taken with her purity and gentleness and holiness, for they no longer revere her virtues, though they have not lost faith in her power. All this Alphonsus saw with the instinct, or rather the inspiration of a saint ; and here was the work for which now he had to exchange the gown of the lawyer, and the exciting triumphs of legal subtlety and eloquence.

But he saw more. It were at best a pitiable sight—that of this multitude of human beings, passing from life to death, through labours unrewarded, except with the solace that comes from sin. But there was eternity ! eternity before them ; and would it not be work, the most sublime that human hand ever touched, to fit those souls for Heaven—to save those souls from hell. For, mark it well, those saints of God are no visionaries, as the world too freely supposes. Alphonsus did not take his conception of hell from poetic dreamers, who fill its gloomy mansions with angelic intelligences, delivering pompous speeches against the Most High, nor did he follow the idea of his own countryman and create puppets of the imagination that the world might see with pleasant curiosity. He saw hell as a fire eternal—inextinguishable—kindled by the anger of the Most High God —with the smoke thereof going up for ever and ever, and the worm never dying ; and day by day, falling from the streets of that sunny city into that awful abyss, he saw souls which were present to the blood-stained eyes of Christ in Gethsemani, and the dying eyes of Christ on Calvary, and he knew that every soul that fell into that abyss was a glory to Satan and a shame to Christ. And he heard the voice of God calling to him to save that mighty multitude ; and straightway he went down into the cities, he went out into the plains, and the poor and the ignorant came to him hungry for the bread of life, and thirsting for the waters that spring

from the living fountain. How he accomplished his mighty mission from that 23rd of October, 1723, when he assumed the ecclesiastical dress, down to the day when amidst his brethren, and, like his Master, in agony, he gave up his pure soul to God the Bull of his canonisation tells us: "No toil, no trouble, were spared by him to recall men steeped in vice and wickedness to the loving embraces of God." In summer and winter, in mighty cities and lonely hamlets, in the pulpit, speaking from the depths of his great heart the eternal truths; in the confessional, surrounding his trembling penitents with an atmosphere of love; to-day amongst the lazzaroni, who slept their useless lives away on the quays of Naples; to-morrow among the unlettered peasants of the hills; with no thought of rest or relaxation, but of spending and being spent in the service of his Maker, such was his life of noble work, and noble sacrifice. He made a vow—a difficult one, except to a great saint, and he kept it. "He would never lose a moment of time that could be given to God's service." Now, work of any kind is elevating and ennobling. Be it ever so menial, ever so humble, it has an effect of consecration on the soul. But this work of St. Alphonsus! Not so much a servant, as a co-operator with Christ; lifting the fallen, succouring the weak, healing the bruised, bringing back to the ever-present cross that crowns every hill in that land of faith its message of ever-enduring mercy to those who had forgotten its mystery and meaning.

Sixty years is a long span of life. Sixty years and sixty times sixty is but a moment! Which is true? Both true. Sixty years of labour for things that perish—what is it, but the anguished dream of a moment; what means it, but laurels that fade, and a name that is written on water? But sixty years for God, such as Alphonsus gave; ah! it is a long span of life, for it reaches out into eternity. And who that has not seen the archives of Heaven can tell what mighty

and enduring work was accomplished during these years by Alphonsus? If, as St. Augustine says, the raising of one soul from sin to grace is more than the creation of a world, what value shall we set on the countless souls that were gained to Christ by the ministry of our Saint? As simple priest, as founder of a religious Order, as Bishop, as Doctor, who shall calculate the victories of grace, the sweetness poured upon sorrow, the calm that succeeded despair, in the millions of souls that came under his influence? He may know at least, that has sung from his heart that hymn of gladness which comes after repentance, he may conjecture what peace flowed over the sad earth from his ministry, but the glory that he gave the Most High shall never be known by angels or men until the day of reckoning, when the trumpet shall sound and the seal be broken, and the book shall be opened in the valley of the Judgment.

But St. Alphonsus would also perpetuate his work amongst them. He would pass away in time, but the struggle was a never-ending one, and why should not he make certain that, ever in the field, labouring for Christ Jesus, should be a band of missionaries, filled with his spirit, penetrated by his faith, whose work should be his own, "He hath sent me to preach to the poor, to heal the bruised of heart." But were there not already in the Church, some critic might ask, several religious communities, which St. Alphonsus could join, and to which he might transfer his marvellous zeal and love for souls? Well, those who speak thus do not understand at all the workings of the Holy Spirit in the Catholic Church; they do not know that the spiritual wants of men take different shapes at different times and that the assaults made by the ever-active, ever-watchful enemy, are directed against the Church in so many various forms, as to argue at once their supernatural origin and Satanic ingenuity. It is no secret that St. Dominic was raised up by

God to counteract the Albigensian heresy, that St. Ignatius was specially selected to stem the awful torrent of irreligion and immorality that flowed from the German Reformation; and surely the ecclesiastical historian is not at all mistaken who declares that St. Alphonsus got a special mission to neutralize the awful, far-reaching, destructive consequences that arose from the Voltairian crusade against religion, and the less apparent yet not at all insignificant results of the spread of Jansenist doctrines in France and Italy. For what was the one object of Voltaire's existence? What did he aim at in his writings? What did he try to destroy by those awful powers of satire and ridicule with which God, for His own wise ends, had invested him? Why, he makes no secret of it; he tells the world plainly, that there is one whose worship galls him, whose Name is hateful to him, whose doctrines he detests, and whose religion he will destroy, and that is the same Lord Jesus, whose love had captivated the soul of St. Alphonsus, before whom, in His adorable Sacrament, he spent hours of unutterable bliss, whose Name he is determined to write on the hearts of men, and the fire of whose love he will fling broadcast over the earth, through these new missionaries he has adopted, until the sophisms and satires of infidels shall fall heedless on souls that shall be lifted by faith above reason, and by love even above faith, almost unto the perfect vision of their God.

But one would think that these infidels would be met more rationally by learned Doctors in the Schools and Universities of the Church. What have poor peasants to do with these dangerous teachings, or how can simple missionaries deal with controversies that are so complicated that the very highest intelligences are lost in them? Yes, but St. Alphonsus knew that these dangerous doctrines would filter down from the high places to the lowliest; that in an incredibly short space of time the most unlettered peasant

would hear of and grasp at doctrines that are so flattering to human passions; and with regard to the means, St. Alphonsus employed by far the best antidote against irreligion in a personal love for Jesus Christ—the same love that armed innocent virgins in Rome against the arguments of philosophers and the fiercer arguments of the fire and the beast—the same love that touched the heart of St. Paul and made him eloquent before the Greeks at Athens—the same love that in every age is more than a match for subtlety of argument and charm of eloquence on the lips when the heart is cold and silent. And, therefore, St. Alphonsus, with his own great wisdom, interpreting rightly the words of Jesus Christ: "I came to cast fire upon the earth and what will I but that it be kindled," strove, first of all, to create in his own soul a passionate love for his Divine Master, then that love he would communicate to his brethren in the Order he established, thence it would flow freely on souls that would quicken into life under its blessed influence; and he enshrined that great passion of his life in two little works that will be read in the churches of France long after the fiendish works of Voltaire are forgotten: "The Visits to the Blessed Sacrament," and the "Love of Our Lord Jesus Christ."

Inspired by that same divine love, he entered into that controversy that for seventy years agitated the great College of the Sorbonne, exposed Catholic and Christian doctrines to the ridicule of the unbelievers, created a kind of suppressed antogonism between the Church of France and the centre of Catholic Unity, and was only finally swept away at the last great General Council of the Vatican. With the theology of this Jansenist controversy we have nothing to do. But its whole spirit was so fatal to Christian piety, so opposed to Christian mercy and love, that our Saint threw the whole passion of his soul and all the resources of his

splendid intellect and vast learning into the contest. The Jansenist doctrines were gloomy, dark, despondent, despairful. They made salvation an impossibility to some, they made it a chance—a mere chance—to those who were the elect. They nullified all the Gospel promises—and those divine inspirations to repentance, those guarantees of mercy which you have so often heard with hope, they put them aside, and represented mankind as moving on under a Divine curse to inevitable destruction.

When, condemned by the Church, their worst effects had passed away, they left in the Church of France a spirit of severity and ungentleness, a spirit of terror and fear, that produced lamentable results amongst the people, and made the confessional a tribunal of unbending Justice, and not of surpassing mercy. St. Alphonsus wrote against the evil, and directed his remonstrances, first to the laity, then to the priesthood of the world.

And although when writing against Deists and Materialists he showed wonderful learning and great reasoning power, yet, as I have said, he preferred to meet this evil by increasing the love of Jesus Christ. It was the Jansenist dispute that brought forth all his marvellous talents as theologian and controversialist, and produced works that will last as long as the Church itself, and which have earned for him the title of Doctor. He addressed the laity in a little treatise on ascetic theology that is familiar to you, his treatise on Prayer, and he drew up for the priesthood a series of definite decisions on all practical questions concerning morals, which he embodied in a work that is as familiar as the Bible to priests—his Moral Theology.

Now, I should like to linger for a moment on this particular point, for it appears to me that, next after the foundation of the Redemptorist Order, this was the great work of his life. There is in the Catholic Church an institution

that assumes and commands such power, that has such lofty and sublime pretensions, that is so complicated in its workings, yet so perfect, that rules so universally throughout the world—that if I had no other proof of the Church's Divine origin, I would accept this institution as final and satisfactory evidence. I speak of the confessional. The idea of the confessional must have come from God. Man, with all his pride, could never have attempted to assume the power of the priest in confession, if God Himself did not communicate it. Think of it; it is the government of human souls. It is the right to have laid bare before you the awful secrets of the human heart. It is the right to go down into and probe and examine those sacred depths of the human conscience which the eye of God can alone pierce. It is the privilege of drawing aside the veil which every poor human being draws down so tightly over his heart that no friend can be so dear as to ever dare to touch it.

But with this privilege come a frightful responsibility. Not alone the responsibility of keeping those secrets inviolate—that is comparatively easy; but the responsibility of guiding those souls through dark and intricate ways into the ways of sweetness and light. For of all the strange mysteries that can come under human cognisance, the most mysterious is the human heart. Its feelings, its thoughts, its desires, its waywardness, its meanness, its nobility, its grandeur, are inexplicable, except to Him who made it. Every day in your local hospitals a hundred stand eager and watchful round a couch where a patient is lying, over whom is the surgeon and his knife. Life and death depend on the success of the operation. A single tremor of the hand, a single misdirection of the mind, will be fatal. Will any surgeon assume the responsibility but one who has steadied his nerves by physical exercise, and his intellect by careful study? But every day and in every Catholic Church in the

world, operations more delicate, because more spiritual, have to be performed, and do you not think that they who are commissioned to touch the delicate nerves of the human soul ought to have strength and knowledge for their mysterious work? Every day, throughout the churches of the world, whenever a priest flings the purple stole around his neck, he has to witness sad tragedies, where he alone can bring relief; he has to hear the suppressed sob from lips that never tremble before the world, and to see tears fall from eyes that at all other times are proudly dry. And do you not think that he requires a scientific training to guide the unwary, to console the wretched, to bind the bruised, and to lift the fallen? Now the "guide, philosopher, friend," of the Catholic priesthood throughout the world is St. Alphonsus Liguori. It is no exaggeration to state that in all doubts and difficulties, and they are many and frequent, there is not a priest in the world that does not fly to our Saint for light and guidance; and there is not a single penitent throughout the world, of all the vast numbers who throng the Confessionals of Christendom, who is not guided by his wisdom and directed by his knowledge. What Plato is to ancient philosophy; what Thomas Aquinas is to Christian philosophy; what Bellarmine is in controversy, that St. Alphonsus is in the practical department of ethical science and the guidance of souls. He has so completely appropriated that department to himself, that none of his predecessors in the same is ever quoted, and all his successors in moral theology are simply his pupils and commentators. And if a priest were to leave our shores in the morning, and were to go forth in the Scriptural sense, without scrip or staff or shoe, he must at least in his most abject poverty, take three books with him—his Breviary, his Missal and the Moral Theology of St. Alphonsus—the first to sing the praises of his God, the second to celebrate the

Eternal Sacrifice, the third to guide to the footstool of God in Heaven whatever souls may be entrusted to him. For well might he say with the Psalmist : " Thy word is a lamp to my feet : and a light to my footsteps." But what is the spirit of this great work ? Need I say that it is the direct converse of everything Jansenistic or severe ? The spirit of Christian mercy is shed over it. In this and the supplemental works he wrote for confessors, the priest is father, physician, counsellor, judge. Yes ! but not so much to condemn as to absolve. And here we meet with what I call the miracle of his life—his profound knowledge of the human heart and his complete mastery of every branch of theological and Scriptural sceince, and his intimate acquaintance with the Fathers and Doctors of the Church. I have said the workings of the human heart are infinite, and I am aware that there may be possibilities of greatness, or of wickedness that have not as yet been developed. But so far as our knowledge goes, there is not a chord in the heart or conscience of men that St. Alphonsus has not touched, and heard there from the harsh discord of passion, or the harmonies of celestial virtues. He knows everything that man can say or think or do. From the wrapt ecstasies of a saint who lives half in heaven, half on earth, down to the slimy abysses of a poor soul, who is tied up by his fellow-men as a brute which would injure or destroy—nothing was concealed from him. From the earnest passionate struggle that a soul in the beginning makes against temptation to the sad compliance and despair—from the scrupulous anxieties of a timid soul who is ever fearful of sin to the cool refinement of villainy of those who live to make sin a science—all was familiar to him. He is never surprised at anything. Like a cool physician he holds his hand on the pulse of humanity, and is always ready with a clear dogmatic opinion. He ascends with the ease of a spirit

from a contemplation of the most loathsome things to a meditation on the most sublime—he knows how to touch the most awful diseases of the human soul without suffering to himself or his pupils the slightest defilement. The Divine Law—the Natural Law—Human Law—he is perfectly acquainted with all, and tells you where they unite, where they combine, where they conflict ; and with all his great charity he never suffered the slightest departure from what is just and righteous—he will not allow man to detract from the glory that is due to God, nor from the justice he owes to his brother. In a word we may apply to the directive theology of St. Alphonsus the words of Holy Writ, and say that in his direction of souls, " Mercy and truth have met; justice and peace have kissed."

And then his marvellous learning ! Where did he find time to read those books ? If I except St. Augustine and a modern English writer, I do not know any one who can use the Holy Scriptures like St. Alphonsus, and apparently he has read through a whole library of theology and asceticism. I see this holy man rising with the dawn, and with the dawn in his confessional, I know he gives two hours each day to the preparation, celebration and thanksgiving of Mass, I know he spends hours before the Blessed Sacrament in silent prayer. I see him directing the affairs of a great Order, and journeying from Scala to Nocera, thence to Iliceto and Caposele, visiting the communities that are under his spiritual guidance. I know that Bishops consult him in their difficulties and numbers submit to him cases of conscience. Then half the year he is out on his mission, preaching without cessation, exhorting, receiving and absolving sinners—and to crown all, the Holy Father makes him a Bishop and doubles his labours and his cares, and now he has to govern two hundred or three priests, visit every parish, and every religious community in his diocese confirm and ordain, go down to

his seminary and regulate its discipline and its studies, and with all this he actually is able to read more closely than any student in his seminary—than any professor in his college. Take alone the index to that little volume of prayer, of which I have spoken, and just read the names of the theologians he has consulted. It would take a month of hard labour for an ordinary priest to verify these quotations alone. Where did he get this power, that is not knowledge so much as inspiration? I think I know the secret. Where is your library, said a visitor to St. Thomas, you who have written so much? And the Saint produced his Crucifix. And I am pretty certain that the library of St. Alphonsus was the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. Before that mysterious source of light and grace, he spent many hours of the day. He commenced no arduous work without first committing it to the protection of the Sacred Heart; and whenever he experienced those doubts that will come to all merely human intelligences he sought the counsel of Him who was the light of the world. And as grace supplemented human strength, light from on High supplemented the weakness of human perceptions. But had he any other source of strength? Yes! and I dare not—I cannot forget it. That sublime vision that struck the eyes of St. John in Patmos with its splendour—"the woman clothed with the sun"—had also shed the light of her beauty and her brightness on our Saint, and kindled a love within him, which broke forth in praise, that to a worldly or impious mind would seem extravagant. To his pure and lofty mind the awful grandeur of Mary's sanctity was a perpetual source of wonderment, and he dwelt on it with that intense pleasure and enthusiasm with which saints always regard whatever is a glory of God's handiwork. It lifted him above earth to perceive that one of God's human creatures could be made capable of such splendours of virtue and power as the Mother

of God possessed ; and failing human speech to paint her spiritual beauty he had recourse to the words of the Divinity, and enlisted on her behalf the Psalmist and the inspired author of the Canticle of Canticles to praise and exalt her, and pour from his overflowing heart the happiness and joy that filled it for God's wonderful dealings with His handmaid. And once possessed of these sublime ideas, he cannot rest until the world adopts them, and sends up to Mary's throne in Heaven the incense of its praise and veneration. And he appeals to the selfishness of the human heart to love her, for she has the power beyond angels to save and protect ; and the lightnings of God's anger cannot smite those who rest under the shadow of her protection. To all things of darkness and evil she is the resistless foe ; clad in the awful strength of her purity, she keeps far from her and from those she protects all things of slime and sin ; the very thought of her alone chases impure suggestions ; the very whisper of her name scatters the strength of spirits that are defiled ; the slightest homage ensures her enduring protection ; and he exhausts all the resources of his own eloquent language to persuade men of her dignity and privileges, of her mercy and her power. And for himself, well, he is amply rewarded in being her servant and her preacher ; and he repeats very often, with ever-increasing consolation : " They that work by me shall not sin ; they that preach me shall have life everlasting."

Yet, great as was his influence—priceless his work for God, we should hesitate to name him saint if there were not something else to crown his sanctity. Power is to be reverenced—but " power is made perfect in infirmity," and it belonged to St. Alphonsus as a right and a privilege—that he should suffer. And he did. I do not for a moment pretend to have gauged the depths of this great soul so perfectly, that I can say with any certainty how much he endured, for

in any case the keenest sufferings are those which are not exposed to the eyes of men, and great saints have the talent of keeping their secret sorrows for the eye of God alone. But we can form an approximate idea of what even saints endure by considering what exactly we should feel in similar circumstances, making always allowance for the fact that if great saints have great graces, they at the same time have souls whose very grandeur makes them more sensible to pain than ordinary beings—for the more lofty they are the more refined—the more refined the more sensitive to those tortures that come from men, from the hands of God, and perhaps still more frequently from themselves.

If we had no historical fact to prove it, we might fairly conjecture that St. Alphonsus was bitterly opposed in everything that he undertook for the glory of God, and the service of religion. For it is a fact that admits of no exception, that never yet has a good work been attempted that has not been in its very inception violently thwarted and opposed. Nay, there never has been a work of any real worth attempted that has not been opposed by the wise and good. The work of St. Alphonsus was no exception. He had no sooner, at the special request of a holy Bishop, and the still more earnest request of a holy nun, laid the foundations of his great Order, than immediately a storm was raised around him, terrific in its intensity, and promising, alas! to be successful in its attempts at destruction. St. Alphonsus was called a fanatic, an enthusiast, a visionary, and a self-seeker—all the old objections against the establishment of regular Orders were paraded before him. Still he persevered Then his brethren grew troublesome. Merely evangelising the poor! What a paltry object! Would he not establish colleges? Would he not extend their sphere of labour, and diversify it by embracing several objects? No! was the answer. "He hath sent me to preach to the poor." Then

we shall leave. And they did ; fell away from his side like the Apostles of old, scandalized because of his humility, not knowing of what spirit they were. And with two companions alone, the Saint commenced his mighty work. I pass over the long years of his labours for Christ, merely saying that during these years, "thou shalt labour," "thou shalt suffer ! " was his lot, and come to the end, just to see how God perfected his work. St. Alphonsus had been Bishop, and had laid aside his mitre and his staff, and was looking forward to some peaceful years, when hot and heavy from the hands of God sorrow fell upon him. He was struck by disease—agonising, chronic disease, which bent him together in throes of suffering, so that he could not look upon the "sweet heavens," hardly lift his eyes to the face of his fellow-men. Sharp upon this came mental anguish —a trial so bitter that they alone who have passed through its agonies can realize it. A feeling of despair came over him—an intense fear that life was misspent, and that the fire and the worm alone remained as his award. Would he ever see God's face, but in anger ? Had he done God's work carelessly ? Those souls, those thousand souls, that had passed through his hands to be prepared for eternity, where were they ? Suppose that one soul even was lost through indiscretion, could he ever look on the face of Jesus Christ ? And after all, were these years wasted ? Was all his work a heap of ashes, corroded by earthly vanity ? Did not self, self, enter into everything ? And if it should be so, great God, is he never to see the face of Him, whom behind the Sacramental veils he had so passionately worshipped and loved ? Is he never to touch the hand of Christ, never to hear that voice that is sweeter than honey, or the honey-comb ? And Mary, Mary, the Queen and Empress of his soul, whose face hallowed his dreams, whose presence filled his waking moments, is he never to see her, but to go down into

the pit amongst all those things he feared and loathed, and be compelled to blaspheme those whom he loved with all the passionate earnestness of a pure heart? I do not want to depreciate the sufferings of the martyrs, but I had rather pass through the fire fifty times, and be ground by the teeth of wild beasts, than endure one day's martyrdom when the face of God is clouded in the heavens, and the peace of God is broken in the heart. And, then, to crown all, behold! he is in disfavour in Rome. Temporal princes and crafty men have brought matters to this issue, that not only have the rules of the Order been changed for the worse without his consent, but the congregation itself has been divided into two provinces, and to crown it all, St. Alphonsus is actually driven from the Order he himself established, and deprvied of its privileges. Expelled from his own Order, which he had constructed with infinite care, and to which he had given the best labour of fifty years, made a subject instead of a superior, and looked upon with suspicion and disfavour by that same Holy See, whose lightest word was to him a command, and whose Divine prerogatives he had ever most strenuously defended! And thus he died. In the tortures of physical pain, in the agony of acute despair, under the frowns of men—what more was there to make him like Him who died in the tortures of crucifixion, with the cry on His lips: "My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and with the cry in His ears: "Vah! if Thou art the son of God, save Thyself and we will believe in Thee!" Of course after his death all things righted themselves. The Order was united, and strengthened and spread itself over the civilized earth. The Pontiff confessed: "I have been persecuting a Saint;" decree after decree has come forth, sanctioning his work, and finally making him a doctor of the Church; the sunshine of God is streaming after the storm, but let us not forget that it was in the storm he

died, as the darkness came down on Calvary, and the lightning flashed, when his great Master declared that his work, too, was accomplished.

And now I cannot conclude this sketch without remarking that there is a lesson in the life of our Saint, for all of us to learn. In the midst of the awful tragedy of human life, its false ambitions, its tragical loves and despairs, it is wholesome to contemplate a life, rounded to perfection, a soul, that, forgetful of self, sought only God's glory and man's benefit. Yet high above us though Alphonsus is, can we forget that our vocation is even as his? I mean persons who have to labour and toil for daily food—who have to bend under the burden and bear the heat, and in much weariness and sorrow to pass from their labours unto rest; yet, we might remember that we have come into God's open world with the same dowry from our Father that St. Alphonsus had—the gift of an immortal soul, with a mission to labour for God here, and the destiny of being blessed with Him hereafter.

II.—St. Aloysius Gonzaga.

The sanctity of Almighty God is simple and uniform, but the sanctity of God, as manifested in His saints, is marked by as many different degrees or characteristics as there are individuals. It is through the holiness of His saints we come to know what the holiness of God is; by studying their sanctity, part by part, we grasp at length something like a true idea of the infinite sanctity of God. A ray of pure white light may be broken up into many rays of different colours, and these rays of different colours may again be collected, until they form but a single ray of white light. It is thus with the sanctity of God and the

sanctity of His saints. The sanctity of God is broken and manifested to the world in the particular sanctity of individual saints ; but it is in God alone that all perfections are blended. It is true that there are general elements of sanctity common to every saint ; but besides these general elements each saint possesses characteristic virtues ; each is a being in himself ; each has some virtue that dominates his character, and distinguishes him from others ; and even the virtues that in our mortal language bear the same names, in no two of the saints of God mean the same thing. Thus, it is true that charity is the virtue of one saint, humility of another, submission to the will of God another ; but it is also true that charity in one saint might mean zeal, in another patience, and submission to the will of God might branch forth into as many virtues as it is God's will should be exercised.

Each saint is a work on which God expends infinite labour and infinite love. Each saint is a model of Divine art—a work that has been wrought out slowly and earnestly by Him, who is the Finger of God's Right Hand and each saint remains as a type of Divine art—of the inventions of Divine grace, and its infinite resources. And it is with this purpose that the Church of God holds for ever before our eyes the virtues of the saints of God. The canonization of a saint is not simply the promulgation of his entry into Heaven, it is rather a selection made from the myriads of souls that day after day enter into the everlasting enjoyments of Heaven—one blessed soul, eminent from its beauty, taken from the rest to exemplify the constant teachings of the Church, to fix our minds upon Heaven, and to prove the beauty and sanctity of the Creator from the beauty and sanctity of His creature. Though visible creation affords us perpetual proofs of this, the saints of God are the proofs which the Church takes from that vast spiritual invisible

creation which lives under the eyes of God, purely spiritual, as the angels, or wedded to matter, as the souls of men.

In these later ages of the Church, it has pleased God to bring before the world a model of Christian perfection, so carefully elaborated that one is tempted to believe that the apparition of angels in human form is not confined to the Old Testament, but that they still walk among men, "seeming indeed to eat and drink, but using an invisible meat and drink which cannot be seen by men." I am referring to the sainted youth Aloysius Gonzaga, once the humblest novice in the Roman College, now one of the greatest saints in the courts of Heaven, whose hidden virtues have filled the whole Church with their perfume, and who was made by Pius IX. the special patron and protector of the young. His is a strange but not an unusual figure in the ranks of the blessed. It is startling to look along the lines of venerable prophets, and grave apostles, and learned doctors, and warrior martyrs, with the blood and the dust of their combat upon them, and discover in the midst of them, honoured as they are honoured, loved as they are loved, a boy, in whom you would think reason had scarcely budded, such a one as you will find every day in the class-room or cloisters of a Catholic College. Such is Aloysius Gonzaga, who in his childhood was beckoned apart by the Holy Spirit and bidden to run swiftly along that way of perfection, which the greatest saints have found to be toilsome and difficult enough.

Like all hidden saints there are few particulars in his life worth noting. He was not known until after death outside the walls of the Roman College. He exercised but little influence upon his time; he was not called to inaugurate a new era in the history of the Church, or to found a religious Order; all the grace of the Holy Spirit was employed in forming his own character, and it was only when

that work was perfected that it was shown to the world, for the world's edification and wonder. In treating, therefore, of such a saint, we cannot speak of his life, but of his virtues.

Now the source of all the sanctity of Aloysius was the habit born with him in baptism, and which grew with him during life, of realizing Divine things, of living in a purely spiritual world, that was opened to him by faith, and was as real to him as the material world is to us. This was visible in his childhood. His head lady nurse, Camilla Magnardi, often told her mistress that when she took the little prince Aluigi in her arms, she experienced a thrill of devotion. At the age of seven, he refused to use a cushion when kneeling; aud even at that age he had begun those austerities for which in after life he was as remarkable as for the innocence which little needed them. This sanctity, even in childhood, is to be attributed to the grace of baptism, and I need only repeat here what Cardinal Manning has written, that such wonderful sanctity is not to be wondered at. It is a much greater matter of surprise that such holy children as Aloysius are not the rule, instead of being the exception. Earthly things had no attraction for him, he was totally absorbed in things of Heaven; and if for a time he turned to them, and appeared to be interested in them, the grace of the Holy Spirit asserted itself, and he turned from them without a sigh to his more natural spiritual life. After the battle of Lepanto, the father of the Saint went in command of three thousand Milanese to defend Tunis against the Sultan, Selim II. He took his little son with him, and the child was delighted with the military movements, and became the delight of the soldiers. But these impressions faded at once from his mind.

Attractions which would have created in other children a passion left no impression on him. He was the very converse of the ordinary type of childhood. In other children

religious impressions die away swiftly and earthly impressions are retained. In Aloysius religious impressions became indelible, and earthly impressions faded. The broad sea gives us a picture of Heaven, but it will not retain for an instant the handwriting of man. Such was the soul of Aloysius.

I have said that this is attributable to the grace of baptism ; but much must be attributed also to the influence of his saintly mother, whose earliest and only desire was that he should be a saint. Aloysius was, as I have said, the very converse of ordinary boyhood. His mother was the converse of ordinary motherhood. For, whereas other mothers bend the thoughts of their children, first to earth, and then try to raise them to Heaven, the mother of Aloysius never suffered the thoughts of her child to rest any where but in God. She began with the higher, and she interpreted the lower by it. She trained him to live habitually in Heaven, and to regard earth as an exile ; and, therefore, when his thoughts did wander upon earth, they spiritualized everything that became the subject of them. Other children, on the contrary, are taught to gravitate constantly to the earth ; therefore, whenever they try to look towards heaven, it is with minds filled with gross, carnal, and earthly ideas.

Now it was from this habit of realizing spiritual things that Aloysius derived the power which he possessed of being able to pray without hindrance or distraction. Though very young, he had learned in the few years of his pilgrimage all those practical precepts of piety, which all the saints have regarded as the very first and most important principles of religious life. It is not a matter of surprise, therefore, that he should have recognized and taught the necessity and power of prayer. His biographers tell us, that his life-long study had been to pray much, to pray well, to pray always ; and that so convinced was he that prayer is the

great lever in spiritual things that he used to say that it was well nigh impossible for any but a man of prayer and recollection to acquire full dominion over himself. In common with all other saints, Aloysius knew that prayer is the one and only omnipotence man possesses ; hence, in those who aspire after perfection, it is but common wisdom to make their lives lives of prayer. Hence the need of contemplative Orders in the Church—of men and women whose only business in life consists in doing violence to Heaven by prayer. In working out their own salvation, and in calling down graces upon the Church, they are to the Church what men of thought are to the world. It is thought that stirs the the world, and enables the world not only to live, but to progress ; it is silent prayer that moves the Church. It is the student, by the midnight lamp in his study, that exercises the most influence on the lives and actions of men ; it is the religious, praying by the midnight lamp before the Blessed Sacrament in the Sanctuary, that shapes the destinies of the Church. And as the thinker is forced by necessity to think, so the saint is forced by necessity to pray ; it is the habit of his life. Hence, we read of Aloysius, that when engaged in preparing for the repast, he would say : " Let us go and lay the cloth for our Lord or for Madonna," and during the ordinary occupations of the day his soul was visited by God with marvellous consolations, and these not passing touches, or short elevations of spirit, but overflowing torrents of joy.

From this we may easily understand how perfect was his detachment from the world. He was constantly renouncing even what was most innocent in human friendship, and therefore his soul lived in the most complete repose—not a breath of the world ever ruffled the placid depths of his soul, which was ever receiving a clear image of God.

But if we go deeper still into the soul of Aloysius, we shall

find that the root of all his virtues was, of course, humility. This explains his timidity, his sensitiveness about the least sin. His watchfulness over himself seems extravagance, and it would be if he had not such a treasure as baptismal innocence to preserve. And he knew that the only way to preserve that innocence was by humility. He knew that if only one single thought of pride is admitted into the soul, an avenue lies wide open for any sin and for every sin. There is a divine strength in every soul in the state of grace, but nothing so easily subverts that strength as a single motion of pride. Hence he used to say : " I am a crooked piece of iron, and I am come into religion to be made straight by the hammer of mortification and penance." Once, when an aged ecclesiastic asked his blessing, he shrank back in humiliation ; though born a prince, he would often beg permission to go about Rome in a tattered habit, with a bag on his shoulder, to solicit alms. When studying at the Roman College, he would not venture to lift his eyes when conversing even with lay brothers, and the seculars in authority. Often, as his biographer tells us, he would wander into the country through the Porta Comasina, always selecting Thursday for his stroll ; and after bidding his attendants remain behind, he might have been seen hastening on the way, now reading, now picking violets, as though to while away the time, like one who is watching and waiting for some expected meeting. By and by, in the distance might be descried the black figures of the Fathers approaching. They were returning from Chisolfa, a villa which they possessed, about a mile and a half from the town, and where every week they spent some hours of recreation on that day. Aloysius would now stand close to their path ; he watched for the joy of that moment to salute them courteously and reverentially as they passed; he would then follow softly on their steps, leaving such discreet interval as should remove

him from their company, but keeping his eyes intently fixed on their retreating forms, as if he beheld so many blessed angels defiling from the gates of Paradise.

The example of such a saintly youth could not fail to exercise an influence upon the community in which he lived. If vice is contagious, so is virtue. The most hidden saint must of necessity bring many souls to God, just as the vicious life, however hidden, will influence many unto perdition. Therefore, it is not surprising to be told that "few weeks had passed after Aloysius entered upon his novitiate before a palpable change came over the Roman College."

The flame of Divine Love seemed to dart from one bosom to another, and even the coldest felt its warmth and began to kindle like the rest, so that Cepari himself, the witness of what he describes, when in summer time he contemplated two hundred students scattered through the garden in parties of three or four at the recreation hour, could feel well assured from his knowledge of all, that there was but one subject of discourse among them, as they sat or wandered at will, like so many angels communing together amongst the trees of Paradise. Even his superiors felt the influence of Aloysius. The great Bellarmine says of him: "When I gave the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius to Aluigi, I discovered in him such abundance of Divine light, that I must confess that at my advanced age, I learned from this youth how to meditate."

Now, there is no want of proofs, absolute and convincing, of the Divinity of the Catholic Church. The very least of her dogmas is so supported and environed with proofs, that to hesitate to admit their truth is to deny the possibility of all certainty whatever. But even if Scripture and tradition did not give their testimony to her truth, if it were still an open question, which of the Churches is the Church of Christ, I should not hesitate to decide in favour of the

Catholic Church, from the one fact, that she is the Mother of St. Aloysius. To my mind that one fact is an indisputable proof of her Divine orgin and her Divine mission. For God Himself could not raise virtue from a vicious soil, nor purity out of corruption. And when we consider that Aloysius is not the only type of youthful sanctity in the Church, that there is a Stanislaus and a Berchmans side by side with him upon her altars, and that you look in vain in any other Church for even the faintest approach to such heroic sanctity, for the hundredth time we conclude that she alone possesses the eternal promises as the spotless bride of Jesus Christ.

I have said that the late Pontiff Pius IX. put him before the world as the model for the young. He is held up before them as a type of all those virtues which they, as well as he, are bound by virtue of their vocation to practise—humility and the modesty that springs from humility, and the obedience that is engrafted on humility, and constant prayer that is suggested by humility, and holy purity that finds its only protection in humility. There is no Catholic that does not feel reverence for such a saint. There is no Catholic that does not feel a legitimate pride in contemplating such a model of Christian holiness. There are few, especially among the young, who, being conscious to themselves that they are not like Aloysius, do not feel a just indignation against themselves, and almost reproach Heaven for their backwardness in the ways of Divine grace. Worship of superior excellence is the truest proof that great hopes remain for us. And there is no saint who is so well deserving of the worship of the young as Aloysius. And moreover there was nothing childish about his virtue. He braved the anger of his father for years, when he was prevented from following out his vocation ; and I have no doubt that, had he been called to it, he would have stood like Pancra-

tius, with equal courage, on the Roman sands, with a smile upon his face, whilst the panther was sucking the life-blood from his throat.

And where is the ambition of Christian mothers? How many are there whose first thought for their children is to make those children saints? There are few saints like Aloysius, because there are few mothers like the mother of Aloysius, who train their chlldren in piety from their earliest years, and preserve them from everything that could corrupt them. There is no Catholic father or mother who does not wish his children to become saints. But how few are there who know that the task of making their children saints devolves upon themselves. Innocence is precious beyond all price, and therefore it is impossible to be too careful in preserving it. The rarest plants are the most delicate. And it is only by shielding innocence from anything that can hurt, it is only by doubling and redoubling, day after day, our watchfulness and care, it is only by preserving it from the breath of sin, in which are the seeds of death, that innocence can be preserved undefiled.

Mary, the Queen of Saints.

"Ne avertas oculos a fulgore hujus, sideris si non vis obrui procellis."
—*St. Bernard.*

I.

THE teaching of the Catholic Church is always marked by extreme accuracy. There is no height so exalted that theology does not explore, for, as has been well said, "the science of theology extends on the one hand to the Infinite God and on the other to the tiniest atom:" and yet we find that when the Church teaches by the universal voice of the people or defines through the lips of her Councils or her Supreme Pontiff, that teaching is as precise and definite, as if all the subjects of it came under the domain of human reason. Now, in nothing is this more remarkable than in her treatment of the doctrine of the Incarnation itself, and all the collateral dogmas that belong to it, especially the relationship between Mother and Son. She unites them both in her worship, and yet the worship paid to the Mother is never allowed

to diminish in the least the worship that is paid to the Son; even when she seems to stand alone before the eyes of the Church, she does not eclipse her Child, but reflects upon Him all the glory with which she is surrounded by the Church.

Most emphatically does the Church always insist upon the close, intimate relationship of the Son and the Mother; and yet she tells us with no less emphasis, that between Him, the Creator, and her, the creature, there is a wide gulf of separation, a difference in origin, in nature, in attributes, in dignity, so vast, that neither His filial love for her, nor her maternal love for Him can ever lessen it by a single span. This is observable in the Feasts of the year dedicated to our Lord and His Blessed Mother. There is a marked correspondence between the titles and the objects of the Feasts that are held in honour of our Blessed Lord and those that are held in honour of His Immaculate Mother. To the Annunciation, which is simply the Conception of the Word made Flesh, corresponds the Immaculate Conception; to Christmas corresponds the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin; to Good Friday the Feast of the Seven Dolours; and to the Ascension the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin into Heaven. This correspondence marks the Church's sense of the close union there must always exist between the Mother and the Son. But, if we examine closely, we shall find, that even in her choice of words, the Church is most particular, that we may not misunderstand her doctrine, nor confound the worship we pay to Mary with the worship we pay to Jesus.

In celebrating, by a special feast, Mary's corporal Assumption into Heaven, the Church has consulted for her honour; and in her choice of the word "Assumption" and the meaning she attaches to it, she has marked the distinction between the operation of nature in the Ascension of Christ, and the operation of grace in the Assumption of His Mother. The Assumption, therefore, of our Blessed Lady is recognised as a privilege

peculiar to herself; for it marks the distinction between the glorification of Mary's body, effected by a power not her own, and the glorification of the Body of Christ effected by His own Omnipotence; whilst it proves Mary's vast superiority over all other creatures of God, inasmuch as her resurrection was anticipated by God, and if she shared the penalty of death in common with all the children of Adam, she was exempted from that dissolution which followed upon death, by the special favour of the Almighty.

II.

After fifteen years of silent waiting, fifteen years of exile from Jesus, fifteen years of yearnings and heart-sickness, such as they say mothers only know, Mary is on her deathbed and about to be re-united with her Son. Fifteen years she spent without Him, before the great morning of the Annunciation, and fifteen years she has remained without Him, since the day when she strained her eyes to catch one last glimpse of His beatified countenance, as the cloud on Olivet enveloped Him, and hid Him away from her sight. Mary's life was one long dolour; a life of active suffering while Jesus was with her, for the prophecy of Simeon was for ever ringing in her ears, and Calvary was every moment drawing nearer; its dark shadow with the three crosses for ever loomed over the quiet home of Nazareth. A life of passive suffering now that the great tragedy was finished; but a passive suffering more keen, more desolating, more agonizing, for the light of her life had gone out. The anticipation of the sufferings of Jesus, the awful realisation of those anticipations on Calvary, sadly embittered the life of Mary; but then Jesus was with her, and His presence sweetened all the sorrow; during the last fifteen years there was no active pain, no terrible real sorrows, such as had racked her soul during the life of Jesus on earth; but

now Jesus is gone; it is night; the sun has been taken from her universe; life is a blank, all the sorrow of life is concentrated here; she has settled down into that quiet, silent, patient grief that sees no hope but in the grave. I do believe that Mary alone of all creatures could understand that saying of Thomas a Kempis: "To be without Jesus is a grievous hell; to be with Jesus a sweet paradise."

However, her sorrows are now about to end. She is on her death-bed. The Apostles have been summoned by some spiritual telegraphy to Jerusalem—some sort of shuddering instinct, that pervaded the Church, that she who was its soul its life since Jesus died, is now about to rejoin Jesus in Heaven.

A quiet chamber, simple in its appointments as was the little chamber of Nazareth. An old man stands at the foot of the bed whereon reposes the dying Queen; and as he catches a last glimpse of the dying eyes there are tears upon his cheeks, for there come to him reminiscences of the eyes of Jesus, and of that awful glance that pierced his own soul on that night of horrors in Pilate's Hall. A man in the prime of life stands with an expression on his features something like to that which they wore fifteen years ago on Calvary; he lost a brother in Jesus then; he is losing a mother in Mary now; it is John, alone thought worthy by Jesus to be the adopted virginal son and protector of the Virgin of Virgins. Near the head of the dying Queen there is pillowed another head, pillowed as it was fifteen years ago, on the blood-stained, nail-pierced feet of Jesus as He hung upon the cross. It is the woman that sole into the dining-room of Simon the leper, and washed with her tears, and dried with her hair, the feet of Him who sat there. She is whispering a message to the Mother for the Son—an assurance that Jesus does not need, that Magdalen has been loyal to Him. Around the room are scattered groups of mild, earnest men, waiting with a kind of pious curiosity, not unmixed with sorrow, to see what kind of

death the Mother of their Master will die. They were not on Calvary. "The Shepherd was struck and the sheep were dispersed;" but they heard from Magdalen and John of the burning words which Jesus spoke, and they saw from afar the horrors amid which the great tragedy was consummated; they expect some other heavenly demonstrations at the death of the Mother; perhaps they expect to catch another glimpse of Jesus when He comes to take His Mother to heaven.

But what is Mary thinking of all this time? They say that at the hour of death the mind is empowered to cast one great retrospective glance over its life, and that glance comprehends every thought, every word, every action, in their minutest details. If it be so, what a strange panorama was that which passed before the eyes of Mary! The quiet days in the temple; the little room of Nazareth lighted up by the presence of an angel, the few words that were spoken, and the mighty, ineffable mystery that was accomplished; that evening on the hills of Judea when Elizabeth came to meet her and saluted her as the Mother of God, and she herself in the exuberance of her gratitude broke out under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost into the sublime strains of the Magnificat; the horror that filled her soul when Simeon revealed to her at what a terrible cost she had become the Mother of Him who was to be crucified for His people; the desolation and the sorrow of the three days that she was separated from Jesus; every painful circumstance connected with the flight to Egypt —the hurried preparation, the cries of the children, the wailing of the mothers, the silent, weary journey on the desert, the strange Egyptian faces in Heliopolis; that day in Cana when to please her Jesus anticipated His time, and broke through the eternal decrees; the three years' missionary life and the crowning sorrow on Calvary. Yes, Jesus dying in pain and His Mother dying in peace; Jesus dying friendless, forsaken; and Mary dying surrounded by the princes of the Church;

the dying eyes of Jesus see only the faces of an infuriated mob, distorted with passion and eloquent of the hate they bear Him; the dying eyes of the Mother see tender, reverent faces wet with the tears that show how they love her; the ears of the dying Jesus hear only the execrations of the multitude, and "Vah! Vah! come down from the cross and we will believe in Thee;" the ears of the dying mother are open to sounds of heavenly rejoicing, and she learns that it is a gala day in heaven and that all the rejoicings are for her; over the cross of Jesus, the terrible face of the Father is bending in his anger until the dying Son is forced to expostulate, "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" over the couch of the Mother is bending the Most Holy Trinity, the Father whose omnipotence created her, the Spirit whose love espoused her, the Son—her own divine Son—she thinks she remembers those features, but it occurs to her that in all this there must be something wrong; that it scarcely befits the Mother to die as a Queen and the Son to die as a Criminal; the creature to die in peace, and the Creator to die writhing in agony. But then Jesus will have it so. The life of His Mother has been one long martyrdom on His account. Her end at least shall be in peace.

III.

No earthly thought mars her anticipated vision of heaven; no earthly affection makes her parting from earth feel bitter; she has been in the world but she has not been of the world; she has walked over the earth without touching it; human affections she has had but they have been centred in God; her every thought has been of God; her every wish has been to please God; her every desire has been a desire of closer union with God. Her last thoughts, perhaps, linger over Nazareth and Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Calvary, all places

hallowed by the presence of Jesus; but if the presence of God with all His attributes shrouded in human flesh could lend a light to those places, and make the memory of gloomy Calvary so dear, what must not heaven be, where the same God reveals Himself in all the plenitude of His perfections.

No memories of sin long-buried, sins of youth, sins of riper years, rise up around her bed like accusing angels. Her life has been sinless; there is not one stain of earth about her soul; there is not one word, or thought, or action of her life of which she could repent. Her will has ever been in perfect conformity with the will of God; patiently and thankfully she has always submitted to His dispensations even when He decreed to plunge her in seas of sorrow, in which His omnipotence alone could have sustained her, and out of which His omnipotence alone could have rescued her. Therefore for her judgment had no terrors, for her salvation is no uncertainty. Judgment—she was judged long years ago, even before her birth, when the Most Holy Trinity destined her to be the Mother of the Son and to fit her for that high privilege, declared that she should be exempt from the taint upon our race, that sin and hell should have no dominion over her, and commissioned the Holy Spirit to be her custodian, to preserve this Temple of the Lord undefiled, to keep this Ark of the Covenant ever sanctified. Faithfully did the Spirit discharge that commission, and therefore there is no judgment of Mary on her death-bed. For God does not judge His own decrees, neither does the Father judge the works of the Spirit.

With no tie upon earth, with her only hope in Heaven; with no remorse for time, with no fear for eternity, dying out of pure love for God, assuredly the death of Mary is a happy one. Here upon earth are tears of sorrow, the only really eloquent testimony of worth appreciated; and heaven is wild with joy at the prospect of her coming.

Amid songs of heavenly mirth and pæans of heavenly triumph, Jesus now unweaves with tender, reverent hands the bands that are binding His Mother to earth. Once was He helpless in her arms; now she is helpless in His, and now does He repay with the interest which God alone can give all the tenderness and reverence and love that were lavished upon Him in Bethlehem, in Nazareth, and when He lay cold and stiff and lifeless in His Mother's lap on Calvary. Slowly and with gentle respect does He free the soul from its prison, and "there—Peter, John, and Magdalen, guard with jealous eyes this treasure; it has enshrined the noblest soul that ever came from my Father's hands; watch it with reverent care, in three days again we shall require it to grace the mansions of My Father's House for eternity," and "Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come; for the winter is past and gone; come from Libanus my spouse, come from Libanus, come and thou shalt be crowned!" And Jesus takes the soul of His Mother to Heaven, and the Apostles are weeping around the dead body of their Queen.

Before we follow the soul of our Mother to Heaven, let us make one reflection, while we stand in her dead sacred presence. I have spoken of her death as peaceful; but then it was death. The passage of her soul to Heaven was unaccompanied by any of the horrors in which death usually reveals itself. But still it was death. And that solemn fact alone suggests a whole world of thoughts. For when I look upon the cold, mute, impassive features of the Mother of God, when I view that sacred body that gave to God the flesh wherewith He saved the world, lifeless, helpless, inanimate, as is the body of the meanest sinner upon earth, and when I think of that other dead sacred body on Calvary—the eyes of the all-seeing God blind, the hands of the all-powerful God helpless, Jesus dead, Mary dead, I begin to think that the

justice of God is that one of His attributes of which we have the very faintest idea. Oh! if that one primal sin, the apple-bite in Paradise, entailed this dreadful penalty upon our race, and if the justice of God is so inexorable, that it will not remit the punishment even for Mary, even for Jesus, what will be the dealings of that same justice with us whose sins are "countless in their hideous sum, God-mocking in God's open sight, and strong to strike His knowledge dumb?"

IV.

I shall not examine the reason of Mary's Assumption, nor its appropriateness, but merely show, that although not yet defined, it is the doctrine of the Catholic Church at present, and has been her doctrine from the times of the Apostles.

By the Assumption of our Blessed Lady, then, we mean that our Blessed Lady has really departed this life, and is really no longer upon earth; and further, that she has been admitted to the Beatific vision in Heaven, and is in securest possession of God for eternity. These two things are indeed common to our Blessed Lady with every canonized saint. But by the word Assumption, which is now restricted in its meaning to this particular application, we understand that our Blessed Lady was exempted from the law of corruption to which the bodies of men after death are subjected; and that by the special Providence of God, she rose at death or immediately after death, as the saints shall rise at the last day, body and soul, glorious and immortal, and was thus admitted to the eternal happiness of Heaven. Formerly, the word "assumption" was applied to the death of any saint; and on the other hand the words decease, departure, sleep, were applied to the Blessed Virgin. But the word is now restricted in its signification, and is applied exclusively to the Blessed

Virgin's entrance after death, soul and body, into Heaven. And the very word itself implies that it was not by the exercise of her own power, but by the omnipotent love of her Divine Son that she was thus glorified.

That the Catholic Church at present teaches the doctrine of Mary's corporal Assumption into Heaven, as clearly and as explicitly as it is possible, short of definitions, is a fact that it would be senseless to deny. The feast of the Assumption is held by the authority of the Church; the Missal and Breviary speak in clearest terms of the Assumption; the doctrine is preached from every pulpit, without exception, in the Catholic Church; the belief is held firmly and piously by the laity through the world; and, like the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, it has had but few opponents, and these were stifling their own convictions. It was hoped by many that the Holy Father would have proposed the dogma to be defined by the Vatican Council. The venerable Bishop of Nismes, in his pastoral letter on the Vatican Council indicated his opinion, not only that the doctrine was definable, but that its truth was so clear that no preliminary discussion was required. And the Archbishop of Smyrna had petitioned the Holy Father, that as God had inspired him to preach to the world Mary's privilege of Immaculate Conception, so he might set at rest for ever the minds of Christians as to the ultimate triumph of Mary over sin and death, by proposing for the Church's acceptance the doctrine of her Assumption.

But although this fresh triumph has been for the time denied our Blessed Mother, the living voice of the Church, which is the voice of the dead Church, for the Church's utterances never change, is emphatic and unhesitating in professing its belief. And as if to link together its own testimony and the testimony of dead saints, it quotes into its office for the day of the Assumption itself, and for its Octave, sentences and

sermons, to show how tenaciously in past ages the Church clung to the belief. Thus, in the parts of the sermons of St. John of Damascus and St. Bernard that are quoted in the Breviary, the Assumption of our Blessed Lady is in as many words asserted. Mary is "the living ark of the living God, which has its resting-place in the temple of the Lord." She is the "living paradise" taken up into heaven; in her, the old "curse of death" is broken. "The Immaculate Virgin, stained by no earthly affection, did not return to earth; but because she was herself a living heaven, she has her place in the tents of heaven. How could she taste death from whom flowed life to all? She did, however, die because she was a daughter of the old Adam, but she was fitly taken up to the living God, because she was His Mother." These are the words of St. John Damascene of the Greeks, read on the day of the Feast, and from his sermons also are taken extracts to show that the belief in our Lady's death and Assumption are an ancient tradition of the Church.

Now, it is clear to every Catholic mind, that since the doctrine of our Lady's Assumption is taught by the Catholic Church at present, it must have been the teaching of the Catholic Church from all time. Because innovations in doctrines are impossibilities. The deposit of Faith was given once and for ever, and does not admit of addition or improvements. In quoting, therefore, the testimony of past ages, we do so, not with a view of proving the doctrine, but simply to show the devotion to Mary that always existed in the Church.

As a witness to the faith of the Church three hundred years ago, we have Suarez, the great Jesuit theologian, asserting "that the Blessed Virgin a little time after death, arose to glory and the immortal life of body and soul, and then ascended gloriously into Heaven. This," he says, "is the belief of the Universal Church." The Synod of Jerusalem, held about the

same time under the Patriarch Dositheus, cites and proclaims as its own belief the doctrines contained in Cyril Lucas's homily on the death of the Mother of God, and these doctrines are summed up in three propositions: "The All-Holy Virgin's death arose not from sin, but solely from other causes purely physical;" secondly, "she is the great sign in the Heavens spoken of in the Apocalypse;" and thirdly, "she is called a great sign, because she went up into Heaven taking her body with her."

If we go back three hundred years from the time of Suarez, we find the belief of the Church at the time professed by him who has been called the "Angel of the Schools," and who is unquestionably the greatest theologian of the Catholic Church, St. Thomas Aquinas. "It is our belief," he says, "that after death the Blessed Virgin was raised to life again and carried into Heaven, according to the Psalm, Arise, O Lord, into thy rest, Thou and the Ark which Thou hast made holy."

Four centuries before the time of St. Thomas we find that the feast of the Assumption was kept with fast and vigil, and that it ranked in the order of feasts with Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. And in the formularies of the Church at the time it is said that this custom had been received from antiquity, and the Church has always observed it. And in the Sacramentaries of the Church—the Gallican, Gothic, and Gregorian Missals, we find in the prayers and prefaces of the Mass of the feast, Mary's corporal Assumption asserted. St. Peter Damian in his sermon on the Assumption says:—

"With the eyes of the mind look upon the Son as He ascended, and on the Mother as she is assumed, and you shall see a something surprising exhibited in the Ascension of the Son, and a something glorious shown forth in the Assumption of the Virgin. For the Saviour went up into Heaven by

authority of His powerful might, as Lord and Creator, accompanied by the service of angels, not supported by their aid: Mary was taken up into Heaven, but by a decree of grace, which raised her up, with the accompaniment and aid of angels, for grace not nature supported her beneath. Hence this day is named the Assumption; that, the Ascension; since power is different from mercy, and it is the Creator's privilege alone to overpass the nature of things by His own power."

In the ninth century, Theodora Studita wrote, after describing our Blessed Mother as the true Mount Sion in which it pleased God to dwell:—"To-day then the earthly heaven," he says, "wrapped round with the robe of incorruption is removed to an abode which is happier and lasting." And Gregory of Tours in the sixth century wrote:—"And lo again the Lord stood by, and ordered the holy body to be taken up and carried to Paradise, where now, united to the soul, and rejoicing in company with the elect, it enjoys the good things of eternity which shall never come to an end."

V.

Here then we have a chain of evidence reaching as far back as the sixth and fifth centuries, and showing that the doctrine of Mary's Assumption was the belief in all those centuries of the Universal Church, and that the Catholic doctrine has not been modified, but is the same in the nineteenth that it was in the fifth century. We have quoted the testimony of saints and doctors; but we find that even in the schools of theology, where doctrinal questions were so often fiercely debated, and nothing was admitted as the faith of the Church, except it were proved to be so by the unanswerable testimony of contemporaneous and past authority, that the

doctrine of the Assumption held the same place it holds in the hearts of the faithful. In the year 1497 two propositions assailing the truth of the doctrine of the Assumption were advanced and defended by two doctors before the Theological Faculty of Paris. We may gather the sense and the opinions of France from the censures that were passed on these two propositions. The proposition "that Christ met the Virgin Mary in her Assumption is apocryphal," was condemned as "false, contrary to the Fathers, favouring irreverence, offensive to pious ears, calculated to turn the people from their devotion to the Virgin Mother of God," and therefore to be "retracted." The second proposition was, "We are not bound to believe, under pain of mortal sin, that the Virgin was assumed in body and soul, because it is not an article of faith." That proposition was condemned as "rash, scandalous, impious, calculated to lessen the people's devotion towards the Blessed Virgin, false and heretical," and it had therefore to be publicly retracted.

There is another consideration which may be fitly alluded to here. There is no Catholic who does not know the care the Church has always manifested about the preservation of the relics of her saints. Now this reverence for the mortal remains of God's servants can be traced back to Apostolic times, and indeed, can be proved from the Scriptures themselves. The result of this is that there is scarcely a single saint of the early Church of whom we do not possess a relic; and I need not say, that the greater the saint, the greater the care that would be manifested about the preservation of his relics. Now the Catholic Church has never possessed a single relic of Our Blessed Mother. We must, therefore, conclude, either that the Church which has always manifested extraordinary solicitude about the bodies of the servants of God, took no care whatsoever to preserve the sacred remains of her who gave her flesh and blood to the Redeemer of the World;

or else that the corporal Assumption of Our Blessed Lady is an indisputable fact, and that the belief in it is simply that tradition of the Church which originated with those Apostles who stood by the grave of the Virgin of Virgins, and found that God, by raising that sacred Ark from the grave, had preserved her body from corruption, as he had preserved her soul from sin.

Of the glory of the Mother of God in Heaven it is difficult to form even an idea ; yet by comparison we may learn it by approximation. If "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, if it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive what God has prepared for those who love Him," what must not Heaven be to her whose love for God surpassed in intensity the loves of all men and angels ? If the measure of our merit upon earth shall be the measure of our happiness in Heaven, who shall presume to set bounds to the happiness of her whose least action was meritorious, for it was directed to the greater glory of God ? If the happiness of heaven is proportioned to the plenitude wherewith the Beatific Vision is revealed, what must not the happiness of Mary be, for assuredly God will hide very little of His perfections from His Mother ? If the purity of our lives here below will give us a clearer vision of God's infinite attributes in Heaven, if the sanctity of our own souls will be the medium through which we shall view God for ever, how vivid must not Mary's perception of God be, —Mary, whose soul is whiter than the Seraphs ?

Other saints have had characteristic virtues. Mary is the personification of every virtue. Her faith, which was scarcely less than vision, was not greater than her hope, which was absolute certainty, while her charity for God was the moving principle of her life, and the proximate cause of her death. Her obedience was perfect, for her will was identified with the will of God ; her patience under suffering was superhuman ; her poverty was perfect, only think of the stable and her

dependence on John during the latter years of her life. In a word, Mary spoke her vows in the temple. They were the first notes of a life-hymn, whose music sounded strangely pleasing in the ears of God ; it drew Him down from Heaven ; it will hold Him spell-bound for eternity, and in saying all this I am but paraphrasing the words of Gabriel, " Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee ! "

They say that it was the foreknowledge of the dignity to which God would raise our nature by assuming it in the Incarnation that so scandalized Lucifer and his fellows that they rebelled and were lost. I think that if he could see Mary to-day near the same sacred humanity of Jesus in Heaven, his angelic pride would be doubly offended. Angelic nature in Heaven ; lost angelic natures in hell ; human nature upon earth ; but human nature too most highly honoured in Heaven. Angelic nature confirmed in glory in Heaven ; angelic natures hopelessly lost in hell ; men struggling between both on earth, but two human hands ever uplifted before the face of God in Heaven, and a face upturned to Him, on which He cannot look without emotion. Neither can we, the children of Eve, look upon it without hope. If we had only a certainty that those hands were ever uplifted for us in Heaven, or that the voice of the Mother ever pleaded for us with her Son, we should not envy the angels their confirmed glory, or the security of their bliss. Reign on, great Queen ! draw thy bright mantle around thee, fix the star-diadem on thy head ! Royalty, even though it be the Royalty of Heaven, shall be to thee no sinecure ; thou hast us and a whole world yet to save !

VI.

And now I cannot do better than conclude these chapters on the Mother of God and her Saints by a reference to Mary as the Christian ideal of all true womanhood. It is almost universally agreed, even by many who have not the full light of Catholic faith, that the Blessed Virgin occupies a large part in the designs of God and in the economy of His Church—and that, quite apart from her ministry and prerogatives as Mother of the Redeemer, she holds a very peculiar and important place in the world-wide organisation that sprang from the wounded side of her Son on Calvary. The fact that she was the divinely-appointed instrument of the Incarnation has raised her to a unique position in heaven; but it has also given her (apart from the glory of the divine maternity) a distinct vocation and mission to the children of men. And just as the Incarnation is, as it were, repeated in the sacrifice of the Mass, never ceasing to be a fountain of grace and mercy to the faithful, so the maternity of Mary is ever fruitful in its symbolism and far-reaching influence in the realisation of perfect womanhood, which before her time seemed to be but a half suppressed revelation, or even the idle dream of ambitious weakness. "Woman," says a very ancient author, "at any epoch of her life was always considered as a mirror before the establishment of that immortal code which has enfranchised man, and placed the woman and the slaves on terms of equality with him." And, seizing with divine insight on this idea, the Church at once adopted our Blessed Lady as her type of all the perfection to which it was desirable that woman should attain.

As a witness to the admissions of Protestant thinkers on this subject, I may quote the words of John Ruskin, which are all the more remarkable, as his mind, which was trained in

the narrowest school of Scotch Calvinism, had little natural sympathy with Catholic principles and ideals. He says:—"To the Protestant mind the dignities ascribed to the Madonna have always been a violent offence; they are one of the parts of the Catholic faith which are open to reasonable dispute, and least comprehensible by the average realistic and materialist temper of the Reformation. But, after the most careful examination, neither as adversary nor as friend, of the influences of Catholicity for good and evil, I am persuaded that the worship of the Madonna has been one of its noblest and most vital graces, and has never been otherwise than productive of true holiness of life and purity of character. . . . There has probably not been an innocent cottage home throughout the length and breadth of Europe during the whole period of vital Christianity in which the imagined presence of the Madonna has not given sanctity to the humblest duties, and comfort to the sorest trials of the lives of women; and every brightest and loftiest achievement of the arts and strength of manhood has been the fulfilment of the assured prophecy of the Israelite maiden, 'He that is mighty hath magnified me, and holy is His Name.'"

Nor is there any exaggeration here. It is almost impossible to exaggerate either the influence of the Christian woman upon her husband, her brothers, and her son, or again of the influence of Mary upon the Christian woman. The mother is the first educator of her children, and Mary is the educator of the Catholic mother. Amongst us Mary is held up as the model of all womankind and of all the phases of womanly life. Her career is put before her sex as the young girl in the Temple, as the spouse of Joseph, the Mother of Jesus, the Dolorous Mother, the Mother of the Apostles and of the Church, the Queen of angels and of men. Our women reverence her as maiden, mother, martyr, queen and protectress. In all their

own phases and circumstances and trials of life they are encouraged to revere Mary, to have recourse to her, to admire and, according to their capacity, to imitate her character and her actions. This is the revelation of God to woman—woman who is at once the daughter of Eve and of Mary.

We are taunted by some of those who do not take any trouble to understand our religion, with putting Mary above God. We do not put her above God, nor do we put her on a pedestal higher than God put her. He chose her to be His Mother, and He could not honour her more. A king cannot choose his mother, but assuredly if he could, there would be no higher way than this of conferring honour upon a woman. Nor indeed can anyone honour himself more than by honouring his mother, nor disgrace himself more than by showing dishonour to a mother's memory.

Jesus Christ was not merely a king. He was God, and in choosing Mary He did—what again an earthly monarch cannot do—He made Mary the purest and fairest of women, the perfect model of womanly virtue and womanly love, and gave her as the crown of all women—that however pure and fair and motherly they might be of their own right and their own nature, they might become more fair and pure, more queenly and more motherly by studying Mary, learning in her school, worshipping at her shrine, and clothing themselves with her characteristics.

There is nothing so surprising in human history as the hold Christianity, held to be the religion of slaves, took upon the world. It was so directly opposed not only to human passion, but even to human philosophy, that its miraculous propagation astonished the Christians themselves. But in no single dogma, or tenet, or practice, was its success so remarkable, as in this sudden and permanent uplifting of men's hearts to a glorious ideal of womanhood, and its final establishment in their minds

as the true type of womanly holiness and beauty. To the Pagan mind, accustomed to the lasciviousness of their deities, this sudden enthronement of perfect purity was the greatest of miracles. And even still, the Christian mind, conscious of its own infirmities, need not suppress its astonishment at this marvellous enthronement of the Virgin Mother in the temples of the lost gods, and in the hearts of their worshippers.

And yet, it is not impossible to understand. The very confraternities of Vestal Virgins seemed to imply that men held faintly to some lost tradition of womanly purity, which had been overlaid by the sensuous worship of heathen systems of religion. Both in Greece and Rome, the privilege of maternity was always considered as not merely as a personal honour, but even as a political benefaction. Hence, when, in lieu of the fast vanishing myths and conjectures of their poets and prophets, there suddenly dawned on the pagan mind—not a shadowy myth, nor a creation of poetry—but a half-divine figure of pure and perfect womanliness, combining all the tender grace of the virgin with the sweetness and dignity of the mother, the world, even though incredulous, soon lost its disbelief. For its admiration soon passed into a higher form of worship, when it became known to men that this mighty woman, foreshadowed by the glory of many a Jewish maiden and foretold from the first beginnings of human life, was no less than the Mother of the Word Incarnate—the willing, obedient instrument in the hands of the Blessed Trinity for the accomplishment of its greatest mystery, and for the manifestation of its love and pity for mankind. And so the sweet vision passed from the angry atmosphere of schools and synods and councils, into the niches and windows of stately cathedrals, into the dreams of poets, into the speculations of master-thinkers—even until we, with our colder faith and more restrained fancy, deem to be extravagant the

adulation of saints and scholars, of painters and poets, to whom this woman of Genesis and the Apocalypse was the inspiration of every theme, and the guerdon of all their labour.

Who, for example, does not feel himself raised far above all the beauty of the senses and all the attractions of the earth by those eloquent and wonderful exclamations of St. Germanus in the Office of the Immaculate Conception ; or the still more enthusiastic and exultant " Gaude ! Gaude Gaude !" of St. Sophronius ; of the fervid and rhetorical exclamations of St. Bernard ; or, last and greatest, by the magnificent apostrophes of St. Tharasius in the same beautiful Office, when, after elaborate comparisons with the patriarchs and prophets of old, who symbolised her, and of whom she remains the Queen, he concludes with that beautiful litany of "Aves," which are like an exultant chaunt of the poets in the morning of faith compared with our tepid "Salves," which have all the weakness and sorrow of valedictions, so subdued are our voices, and so languid is our faith !

And then the painters ! In every shape that spoke of celestial and ethereal loveliness, in every attitude that betokened dignity, in every feature that denoted majesty of rank and tenderness of love, they lavished the riches of their genius, the glory of imagination, the rich, secret sources of their art, the hidden magic of pencil, chisel, and palette, on the one eternal theme—their beloved, their adorable Madonna ! What a choir of saints have hymned her ! What an army of artists have glorified her ! Raffaelle, Murillo, Angelico, Rubens, Holbein, Domenichino, Correggio, Poussin, Ciseri, Mignard, Sassoferrato, Sinlio Romano, Bouguereau,—every climate has lent its colours, every school its students ; nay, every religion its art-votaries to swell the great galleries of Christianity with that one sweet face and figure—the Virgin Mother of God.

It is no wonder, then, that this ideal of perfect womanhood gradually passed from poem and hymn and picture into the hearts and minds of the people ; and created that reverence for weakness that culminated in the religious chivalry of the Middle Ages. That period of human history, if darkened by many deeds that mark the cruelty and despotism of uncurbed and unrestrained power, at least was characterised by the exalted reverence which was paid to womanhood. And, as faith decayed,and poetry and religion began to fade away from the minds of men, that sacred figure, too, began to grow less and less prominent ; and, as it retreated and grew ever dim and dimmer, the old ecstatic reverence for womanhood disappeared with it, until at last, in that awful crisis in human history, the French Revolution, the highest and noblest ladies of France passed under the guillotine, and the very basest and most degraded were raised on the altars of Reason. It was a return to Paganism, without its graces and splendours ; it was the attempted subversion of Christianity without the pretence of substituting in its place even a decent mythology. Woman, raised by nature to the motherhood of the race ; raised even higher, to a spiritual motherhood by the legacy of Christ from the Cross, was dethroned from her supreme dignity, the moment the symbol of Christianity was ruthlessly removed from the temples of men.

The same thing still remains although the contrasts are not so clear cut and vivid. Wherever the spirit of Christ and the Church is in the ascendant, there womanhood is enthroned. Wherever materialism, excluding all that is ideal, or poetical, or religious, dominates the beliefs or theories of mankind, there woman sinks to the level of a mere mechanical slave. The greatest of modern pessimists has written* of her in terms

* Schopenhauer.

which, if loathsome and disgusting, at least are a candid admission of his own loathing and contempt for womanhood. Philosophy degrades her; religion exalts her; because the former refuses to accept the Incarnation, and therefore, the Divine Motherhood, and therefore, the sacredness of her sex; and the latter, seeing in every woman, not only the daughter of Eve, but the Sister of Mary, promptly acknowledges the dignity of the relation, as well as the sacredness of the personality. It is in the Church, therefore, that the dignity of womanhood is safeguarded by her unceasing reverence for the One, who "was blessed amongst women"; and by the manner in which she honours the two prerogatives of the great Virgin Mother—her Maternity and Virginity. By raising marriage to the dignity of a sacrament, Jesus Christ consecrated the sacred office of motherhood; and the Church maintains the sacramental institution and the sacred tradition. By His own divine words, too, the same Divine Lord consecrated the state of virginity; and again the Church follows in the footsteps of her Divine Spouse, by the tremendous safeguards with which she surrounds the religious state, and the honour she pays to virginity in her chosen and chaste spouses. And all this is but the reflection on her subjects of the veneration she feels towards her own Protectress and Queen. Mary, the Mother of God, and the Queen of Heaven is her glory and her crown; and again she casts back upon the children of the Church the veneration that is paid by them to herself as the purest and highest ideal of human life.

Whatever changes, therefore, time may bring along with it—whatever new devotions spring from the teeming mind of the Church, whether to attract the attention, or renew the fervour of Catholics—it is quite certain that this great devotion to the Mother of God will always hold its own in the minds and hearts of the faithful. It has come down to them

from the morning of her Assumption; it will live to the eve of the last great day. In the far future, as in the glorious past, churches will be built in Mary's honour; children will be called by her name; doctors will teach her excellences; poets will hymn her praises; artists rival each other in painting her perfect, spiritual beauty. Still shall she be the Queen of the Universal Church, the destroyer of heresy, the giver of purity, the protectress of the weak, the hope of the fallen, until all the elect of God shall be gathered beneath the shadow of her holiness; and until they pass from the position of her clients on earth, to the higher and even surer state of her worshipper in Heaven!